



A MOUNTAIN OF GEMS

Fairy Tales
of the Peoples
of the Soviet
Land



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Land



Raduga Publishers

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FROM THE TRANSLATOR

Dear readers!

I am sure you all know that the Soviet Union is a huge country, the largest in the world. Its neighbours are Alaska in the east and Scandinavia in the west. In the south it stretches as far as the Caucasus and Pamir mountain ranges, and in the north reaches out into the Arctic Ocean. And the heart, the pulsating heart of this great country, is Moscow.

When the rays of dawn light up the sky of Khabarovsk in the Far East, the sun is only just beginning to set in Minsk, Kiev and other cities in the west, and while icy winds blow in Yakutia, roses bloom in Tashkent and vacationers enjoy the sun on the pebbly beaches of the Black Sea.

Many different peoples live in this huge country, each with their own habits and traditions, their own language. The Uzbek language, for instance, bears as little resemblance to the Russian or, say, the Moldavian as the Arabic does to the English or the Chinese.

And all of the peoples of the Soviet Union have their own fairy tales.

The Chukchi and Nenets tales as well as the tales of other peoples of Russia's North transport us into the snowy tundra, a realm of fierce frosts and howling blizzards, where the dog and the reindeer are man's best friends. In the tales of the peoples of Central Asia caravans of camels plod slowly over the scorching sands, and the ceaseless murmur of water comes from the numerous canals that feed the ever thirsty fields. Other scenes and images rise up before us when we read Russian fairy tales. The stout-hearted young heroes of these tales gallop on horseback over hills and dales which are green in summer and carpeted with snow in winter, while their lovely tsarevnas sit patiently waiting for them in their log towers with windows of mica.

Do you know why I have translated all these fairy tales for you? It was because I enjoyed reading them so much.

Open the book, and you will find yourselves in a world of magic. Together with Ivan the Peasant's Son you will cross swords with Chudo-Yudo, the fire-breathing monster, follow Pokati-Goroshek, or Pca-Roll Along, into the underground kingdom and return from there on the back of an eagle, marvel at the cleverness of Zarniyar who outwitted a cruel Shah, be filled with admiration for Boroldoi-Mergen, the brave hunter of the Altai mountains who risked the life of his own son in order to save his people, delight in the resourcefulness of a simple weaver who surpassed in wisdom the wisest councillors of the Tsar.

And I know that when you have met them, these and other characters in this book, you will grow to love them, and they will become your good and faithful friends.

THE FROG TSAREVNA

A Russian Fairy Tale



Long, long ago there was a Tsar who had three sons. One day, when his sons were grown to manhood, the Tsar called them to him and said:

"My dear sons, while yet I am not old I should like to see you married and to rejoice in the sight of your children and my grandchildren."

And the sons replied:

"If that is your wish, Father, then give us your blessing. Who would you like us to marry?"

"Now, then, my sons, you must each of you take an arrow and go out into the open field. You must shoot the arrows, and wherever they fall, there you will find your destined brides."

The sons bowed to their father, and each of them taking an arrow, went out into the open field. There they drew their bows and let fly their arrows.

The eldest son's arrow fell in a boyar's courtyard and was picked up by the boyar's daughter. The middle son's arrow fell in a rich merchant's yard and was picked up by the merchant's daughter. And as for the youngest son, Tsarevich Ivan, his arrow shot up and flew away he knew not where. He went in search of it and he walked on and on till he reached a marsh, and what did he see sitting there but a Frog with the arrow in its mouth.

Said Tsarevich Ivan to the Frog:

"Come, Froggie, give me back my arrow."

But the Frog replied:

"I will if you marry me!"

"What do you mean, how can I marry a frog!"

"You must, for I am your destined bride."

Tsarevich Ivan felt sad and crestfallen. But there was nothing to be done, so he picked up the Frog and carried it home. And the Tsar celebrated three weddings: his eldest son he married to the boyar's daughter, his middle son, to the merchant's daughter, and poor Tsarevich Ivan, to the Frog.

Some time passed, and the Tsar called his sons to his side.

"I want to see which of your wives is the better needlewoman," said he. "Let them each make me a shirt by tomorrow morning."

The sons bowed to their father and left him.

Tsarevich Ivan came home, sat down and hung his head. And the Frog hopped over the floor and up to him and asked:

"Why do you hang your head, Tsarevich Ivan? What is it that troubles you?"

"Father bids you make him a shirt by tomorrow morning."

Said the Frog:

"Do not grieve, Tsarevich Ivan, but go to bed, for morning is wiser than evening."

Tsarevich Ivan went to bed, and the Frog hopped out on to the porch, cast off its frog skin and turned into Vasilisa the Wise and Clever, a maiden fair beyond compare.

Vasilisa the Wise and Clever stood there, and she clapped her hands and cried:

"Come, my women and maids, make haste and set to work! Make me a shirt by tomorrow morning, like those my father used to wear."

In the morning Tsarevich Ivan awoke, and there was the Frog hopping about again, but the shirt was all ready and lying on the table wrapped in a handsome towel. Tsarevich Ivan was overjoyed. He took the shirt and he went with it to his father who was looking over his two elder sons' gifts. The eldest son laid out his shirt, and the Tsar said:

"This shirt will only do for a poor peasant to wear."

The middle son laid out his shirt, and the Tsar said:

"This shirt will only do to go to the baths in."

Then Tsarevich Ivan laid out his shirt, all beautifully embroidered and sewn with gold and silver thread, and the Tsar took one look at it and said:

"Now, that is a shirt to wear on holidays!"

The two elder brothers went home and they spoke among themselves and said:

"It seems we were wrong to laugh at Tsarevich Ivan's wife. She is no frog, but a witch."

Now the Tsar again called his sons.

"Let your wives bake me some bread by tomorrow morning," said he.

"I want to know which of them is the best cook."

Tsarevich Ivan hung his head and went home. And the Frog asked him:

"Why are you so sad, Tsarevich Ivan?"

Said Tsarevich Ivan:

"You are to bake some bread for my father by tomorrow morning."

"Do not grieve, Tsarevich Ivan, but go to bed. Morning is wiser than evening."

And her two sisters-in-law, who had laughed at the Frog at first, now sent an old woman who worked in the kitchen to see how she baked her bread.

But the Frog was sly and guessed what they were up to. She kneaded some dough, and then she broke off the top of the stove and threw the dough down the hole. The old woman ran to the two sisters-in-law and told them all about it, and they did as the Frog had done.

And the Frog hopped out on to the porch, turned into Vasilisa the Wise and Clever and clapped her hands.

"Come, my women and maids, make haste and set to work!" cried she. "By tomorrow morning bake me some soft white bread, the kind I used to eat in my father's house."

In the morning Tsarevich Ivan woke up, and there was the bread all ready and prettily decorated with all manner of things: stamped figures on the sides and towns with walls and gates on the top.

Tsarevich Ivan was overjoyed. He wrapped up the bread in a towel and took it to his father who was about to look over the loaves his elder sons had brought. Their wives had dropped the dough into the stove as the old woman had told them to do, and the loaves had come out charred and lumpy.

The Tsar took the bread from his eldest son, he looked at it and he sent it to the servants' hall. He took the bread from his middle son and he did the same with it. But when Tsarevich Ivan handed him his bread, the Tsar said:

"Now, that is bread to be eaten only on holidays!"

And the Tsar bade his three sons to come and feast with him on the morrow together with their wives.

Once again Tsarevich Ivan came home sad and sorrowful, and he hung his head very low. And the Frog hopped over the floor and up to him and asked:

"Croak, croak, why are you so sad, Tsarevich Ivan? Is it that your father has grieved you by an unkind word?"

"Oh, Frog, Frog!" cried Tsarevich Ivan. "How can I help being sad? The Tsar has ordered me to bring you to his feast, and how can I show you to people!"

Said the Frog in reply:

"Do not grieve, Tsarevich Ivan, but go to the feast alone, and I will follow later. When you hear a great tramping and thundering, do not be afraid, but if they ask you what it is, say: 'That is my Frog riding in her box.'"

So Tsarevich Ivan went to the feast alone, and his elder brothers came there with their wives who were all dressed up in their finest clothes and had their brows blackened and roses painted on their cheeks. They stood there and made fun of Tsarevich Ivan.

"Why have you come without your wife?" asked they. "You could have brought her in a handkerchief. Wherever did you find such a beauty? You must have searched all the swamps for her."

Now the feast began, and the Tsar with his sons and his daughters-in-law and all the guests took their seats at the oaken tables covered with embroidered cloths. Suddenly there came a great tramping and thundering, and the whole palace shook. The guests were frightened and jumped up from their seats. But Tsarevich Ivan said:

"Do not fear, honest folk. That is only my Frog riding in her box."

And there dashed up to the porch of the Tsar's palace a gilded carriage drawn by six white horses, and out of it stepped Vasilisa the Wise and Clever. Her gown of sky-blue silk was studded with stars, and on her head she wore the bright crescent moon, and so beautiful was she that it cannot be pictured and cannot be told, but was a true wonder and joy to behold! She took Tsarevich Ivan by the hand and led him to the oaken tables covered with embroidered cloths.

The guests began eating and drinking and making merry. And Vasilisa the Wise and Clever drank from her glass and poured the dregs into her left sleeve. She ate some meat and threw the bones into her right sleeve.

And the wives of the elder sons saw what she did and they did the same.

Then the dancing began, and Vasilisa the Wise and Clever caught Tsarevich Ivan by the hand and began to dance. She danced and she

whirled and she circled round and round, and everyone watched and marvelled. She waved her left sleeve, and a lake appeared; she waved her right sleeve, and white swans appeared on the lake. The Tsar and his guests were filled with wonder.

Then the wives of the two elder sons began dancing. They waved their left sleeves and only splashed mead over the guests; they waved their right sleeves, and bones flew out of them, and one bone hit the Tsar in the eye. And the Tsar was very angry and drove out both his daughters-in-law.

In the meantime, Tsarevich Ivan slipped out, ran home, and, finding the frog skin, threw it in the stove and burnt it.

Now Vasilisa the Wise and Clever came home, and she at once saw that her frog skin was gone. She sat down on a bench, looking very sad and sorrowful, and she said to Tsarevich Ivan:

"Ah, Tsarevich Ivan, what have you done! Had you but waited just three more days, I would have been yours for ever. But now farewell. Seek me beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands in the Thrice-Ten Tsardom where lives Koshchei the Deathless."

And Vasilisa the Wise and Clever turned into a grey cuckoo-bird and flew out of the window. Tsarevich Ivan cried and wept for a long time and then he bowed to all four sides of him and went off he knew not where to seek his wife, Vasilisa the Wise and Clever. Whether he walked a short distance or a long, for a short or a long time no one knows, but his boots were worn, his caftan frayed and torn, and his cap battered by the rain. After a while he met a little old man who was as old as old can be.

"Good morrow, good youth!" said he. "What do you seek and whither are you bound?"

Tsarevich Ivan told him all about everything, and the little old man who was as old as old can be, said:

"Ah, Tsarevich Ivan, why did you burn the frog skin? It was not yours to wear or to do away with. Vasilisa the Wise and Clever was born wiser and cleverer than her father, and this so angered him that he turned her into a frog, and a frog she was to be for three years. Ah, well, it can't be helped now. Here is a ball of thread for you. Follow it without fear wherever it rolls."

Tsarevich Ivan thanked the little old man who was as old as old can be, he went after the ball of thread, and he followed it wherever it rolled. He came to an open field and he met a bear there. He took aim and was about to kill it, but the bear said in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Tsarevich Ivan, who knows but you may have need of me some day!"

Tsarevich Ivan took pity on the bear and went on without killing it. By and by what should he see but a drake flying overhead. Tsarevich Ivan took aim, but the drake said to him in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Tsarevich Ivan, who knows but you may have need of me some day!"

And Tsarevich Ivan spared the drake and went on. By and by what should he see but a hare. He took aim quickly and was about to shoot it, but the hare said in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Tsarevich Ivan, who knows but you may have need of me some day!"

And Tsarevich Ivan spared the hare and went farther. He came to the blue sea and he saw a pike lying on the sandy shore and gasping for breath.

"Take pity on me, Tsarevich Ivan," said the pike. "Throw me back into the blue sea!"

So Tsarevich Ivan threw the pike into the sea and walked on along the shore. Whether a long or a short time passed no one knows, but by and by the ball of thread rolled into a forest where, spinning round and round, stood a little hut on chicken feet.

"Please, little hut, stand as once you stood, with your face to me and your back to the wood," said Tsarevich Ivan.

The hut turned its face to him and its back to the forest, and Tsarevich Ivan came inside. And whom should he see there, lying on the edge of the stove ledge, but Baba-Yaga the Witch with the Switch, in a pose she liked best, her crooked nose to the ceiling pressed.

"What brings you here, good youth?" asked Baba-Yaga. "Is there aught you come to seek? Come, good youth, I pray you, speak!"

Said Tsarevich Ivan:

"First steam me in the bath and give me food and drink, you old hag, and then ask your questions."

So Baba-Yaga steamed him in the bath, gave him food and drink and put him to bed, and then Tsarevich Ivan told her that he was seeking his wife, Vasilisa the Wise and Clever.

"I know where she is," said Baba-Yaga. "Koshchei the Deathless is keeping her in his palace. It will be hard getting her back, for it is not easy to get the better of Koshchei. His death is at the point of a needle, the needle is in an egg, the egg in a duck, the duck in a hare, the hare in a stone chest, and the chest at the top of a tall oak-tree which Koshchei the Deathless guards as the apple of his eye."

Tsarevich Ivan spent the night in Baba-Yaga's hut, and in the morning she told him where the tall oak-tree was to be found. Whether

he was long on the way or not no one knows, but by and by he came to the tall oak-tree. It stood there and it rustled and swayed, and the stone chest was at the top of it and very hard to reach.

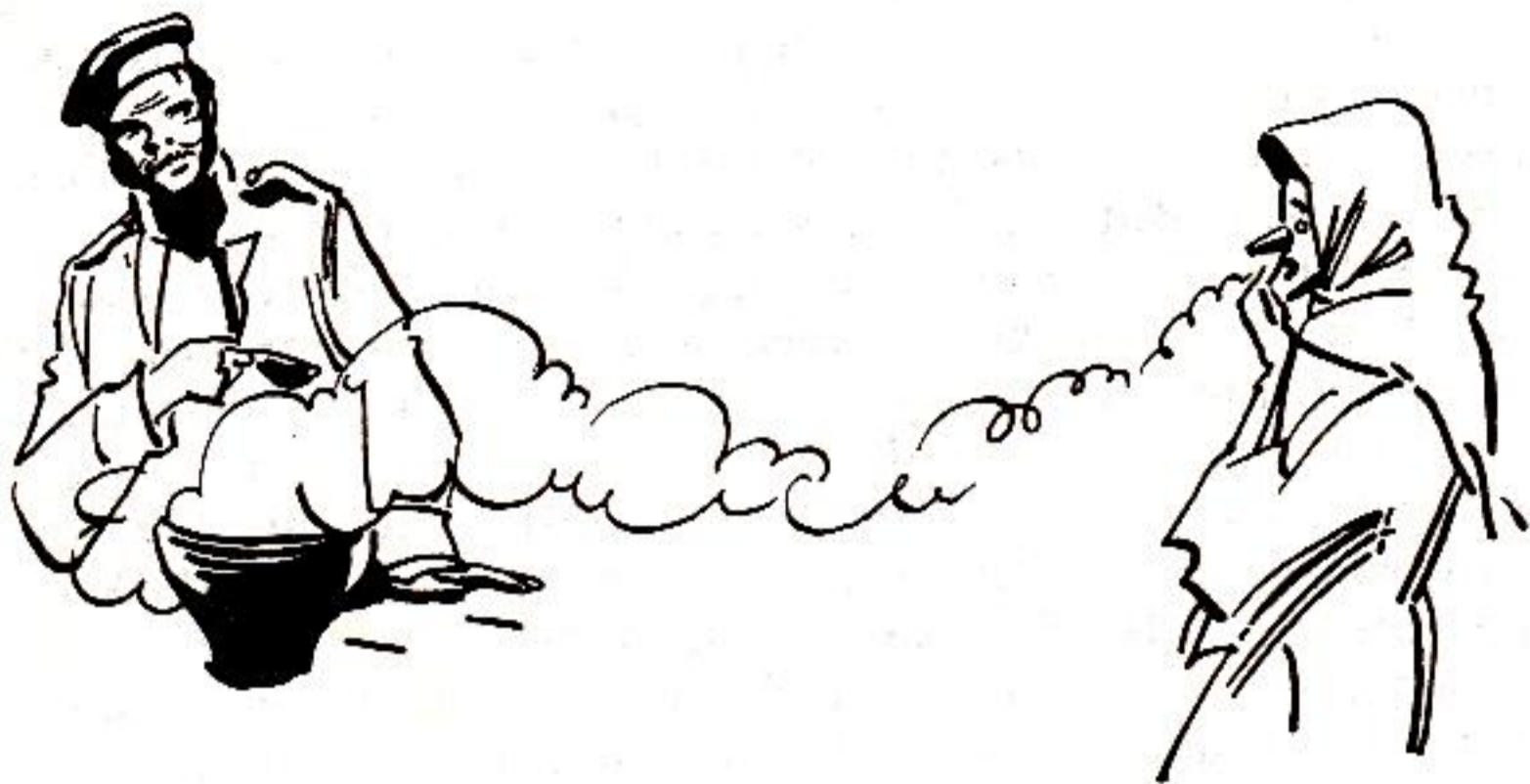
All of a sudden, lo and behold!—the bear came running, and it pulled out the oak-tree, roots and all. Down fell the chest, and it broke open. Out of the chest bounded a hare and away it ran as fast as it could. But another hare appeared and gave it chase. It caught up the first hare and tore it to bits. Out of the hare flew a duck, and it soared up to the very sky. But the drake was upon it in a trice and it struck the duck so hard that it dropped the egg which fell into the blue sea.

At this Tsarevich Ivan began weeping bitter tears, for how could he find the egg in the sea! But all at once the pike came swimming to the shore with the egg in its mouth. Tsarevich Ivan cracked the egg, took out the needle and began trying to break off the point. The more he bent it, the more Koshchei the Deathless writhed and twisted. And when he finally broke it off, Koshchei dropped dead.

Tsarevich Ivan then went to Koshchei's palace of white stone. And Vasilisa the Wise and Clever met him there and kissed him with her honey-sweet lips. After that they went back to their own house and lived there together long and happily till they were quite, quite old.

AXE PORRIDGE

A Russian Fairy Tale



An old soldier was once on his way home where he meant to spend his furlough, and he was tired and hungry. He came to a village and he rapped at the door of the first hut he saw.

"Let a traveller in for the night!" he called.

The door was opened by an old woman.

"Come in, soldier," she said.

"Have you a bite of food for a hungry man, good dame?" the soldier asked.

Now, the old woman had plenty of everything, but she was stingy and pretended to be very poor.

"Ah, me, I've had nothing to eat myself today, dear heart, there's nothing in the house," she wailed.

"Well, if you've nothing, you've nothing," the soldier said. Then he noticed an axe without a handle under the bench: "If there's nothing else, we could make porridge out of that axe."

The old woman threw up her hands in astonishment.

"Axe porridge? Who ever heard the like!"

"I'll show you how to make it. Just give me a pot."

The old woman brought a pot, and the soldier washed the axe, put it in the pot, and, filling the pot with water, placed it on the fire.

The old woman stared at the soldier and never took her eyes off him. The soldier got out a spoon. He stirred the water and then tasted it. "It will soon be ready," said he. "A pity there's no salt."

"Oh, I have salt. Here, take some."

The soldier put some salt in the pot and then tried the water again.

"If we could just add a handful of groats to it," said he.

The old woman brought a small bag of groats from the pantry.

"Here, add as much as you need," said she.

The soldier went on with his cooking, stirring the meal from time to time and tasting it. And the old woman watched and could not tear her eyes away.

"Oh, how tasty this porridge is!" the soldier said, trying a spoonful. "With a bit of butter there could be nothing more delicious."

The old woman brought some butter, and they added it to the porridge.

"Now get a spoon, good dame, and let us eat!" the soldier said.

They began eating the porridge and praising it.

"I never thought axe porridge could taste so good!" the old woman marvelled.

And the soldier ate, and laughed up his sleeve.

CHESTNUT-GREY

A Russian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived an old man who had three sons. The two elder sons were thrifty and close-fisted, but the youngest, Ivan the Fool, was none of those things. He spent most of his time at home sitting on the stove ledge and only going out to gather mushrooms in the forest.

When the time came for the old man to die, he called his three sons to his side and said to them:

"When I die, you must come to my grave every night for three nights and bring me some bread to eat."

The old man died and was buried, and that night the time came for the eldest brother to go to his grave. But he was too lazy or else too frightened to go, and he said to Ivan the Fool:

"If you will only go in my stead to our Father's grave tonight, Ivan, I will buy you a honey-cake."

Ivan readily agreed, took some bread and went to his father's grave. He sat down by the grave and waited to see what would happen. On the stroke of midnight the earth crumbled apart and the old father rose out of his grave and said:

"Who is there? Is it you, my first-born? Tell me how things are in Russ. Are the dogs barking? Are the wolves howling? Is my child weeping?"

And Ivan replied:

"It is I, your son, Father. And all is quiet in Russ."

Then the father ate his fill of the bread Ivan had brought and lay down in his grave again. And as for Ivan, he went home and only stopped to gather some mushrooms on the way.

He came home, and his eldest brother saw him and asked:

"Did you see our Father?"

"Yes, I did," Ivan replied.

"Did he eat of the bread you brought?"

"Yes. He ate till he could eat no more."

Another day passed, and it was the second brother's turn to go to the grave. But he was too lazy or else too frightened to go, and he said to Ivan:

"If only you will go in my stead, Ivan, I will make you a pair of bast shoes."

"Very well," said Ivan, "I'll go."

He took some bread, went to his father's grave and sat there waiting. On the stroke of midnight the earth crumbled apart, the old father rose out of the grave and said:

"Who is there? Is it you, my second-born? Tell me how things are in Russ. Are the dogs barking? Are the wolves howling? Is my child weeping?"

And Ivan replied:

"It is I, your son, Father. And all is quiet in Russ."

Then the father ate his fill of the bread Ivan had brought and went back to his grave. And Ivan went home and only stopped to gather some mushrooms on the way. He came home, and his second brother saw him and asked:

"Did our Father eat of the bread you brought?"

"Yes," Ivan replied. "He ate till he could eat no more."

On the third night it was Ivan's turn to go to the grave and he said to his brothers:

"For two nights I have gone to our Father's grave. Now it is your turn to go and I will stay home and rest."

"Oh no," the brothers replied. "You must go again, Ivan, for you are used to it."

"Very well," Ivan agreed, "I will."

He took some bread and went to the grave, and on the stroke of

midnight the earth crumbled apart and the old father rose out of the grave.

"Who is there?" said he. "Is it you, Ivan, my third-born? Tell me how things are in Russ. Are the dogs barking? Are the wolves howling? Is my child weeping?"

And Ivan replied:

"It is I, your son Ivan, Father. And all is quiet in Russ."

The father ate his fill of the bread Ivan had brought and said to him:

"You were the only one to do as I bade, Ivan. You were not afraid to come to my grave for three nights. Now you must go out into the open field and shout: 'Chestnut-Grey, hear and obey! I call thee nigh to do or die!' When the horse appears before you, climb into his right ear and come out of his left, and you will turn into as comely a lad as ever was seen. Then mount the horse and go where you will."

Ivan took the bridle his father gave him, thanked him and went home, only stopping to gather some mushrooms on the way. He came home, and his brothers saw him and asked:

"Did you see our Father, Ivan?"

"Yes, I did," Ivan replied.

"Did he eat of the bread you brought?"

"Yes, he ate till he could eat no more and he told me not to come to his grave any more."

Now, at this very time the Tsar had a call sounded abroad for all handsome, unmarried young men to gather at court. The Tsar's daughter, Tsarevna Lovely, had ordered a castle of twelve pillars and twelve rows of oak logs to be built for her. And there she meant to sit at the window of the top chamber and await the one who would leap on his steed as high as her window and place a kiss on her lips. To him who succeeded, whether of high or of low birth, the Tsar would give her in marriage and half his tsardom besides.

News of this came to the ears of Ivan's brothers, who agreed between them to try their luck.

They gave a feed of oats to their goodly steeds and led them from the stables, and themselves put on their best apparel and combed their curly locks. And Ivan, who was sitting on the stove ledge behind the chimney, said to them:

"Take me with you, my brothers, and let me try my luck, too."

"You silly sit-by-the-stove!" laughed they. "You will only be mocked at if you go with us. Better go and hunt for mushrooms in the forest."

The brothers mounted their goodly steeds, cocked their hats, gave a whistle and a whoop and galloped off down the road in a cloud of dust.

And Ivan took the bridle his father had given him, went out into the open field and shouted as his father had taught him:

"Chestnut-Grey, hear and obey! I call thee nigh to do or die!"

And lo and behold!—a charger came running towards him. The earth shook under his hoofs, his nostrils spurted flame, and clouds of smoke poured from his ears. The charger galloped up to Ivan, stood stock-still and said:

"What is your wish, Ivan?"

Ivan stroked the steed's neck, bridled him, climbed into his right ear and came out of his left, and lo!—he turned into a youth as fair as the sky at dawn, the handsomest youth that ever was born. He sprang on Chestnut-Grey's back and set off for the Tsar's palace. On ran Chestnut-Grey for a week and a day, passing mountain and dale with a swish of his tail, skirting houses and trees as quick as the breeze.

When at last Ivan arrived at court, the palace grounds were teeming with people. There stood the castle of twelve pillars and twelve rows of oak logs, and high up, at the window of her chamber, sat Tsarevna Lovely. The Tsar stepped out on the porch and said:

"He from among you, good youths, who leaps up on his steed as high as that window there and kisses my daughter's lips, shall have her in marriage and half my tsardom besides."

One after another the wooers of Tsarevna Lovely rode up and forced their steeds to prance and to leap, but all to no avail, for the window was out of their reach. Ivan's two brothers tried with the rest, but with no better success.

When Ivan's turn came, he sent Chestnut-Grey ahead at a gallop and with a whoop and a shout leapt up as high as the highest row of logs but two. On he came again and leapt up as high as the highest row but one. One more chance was left him, and he pranced and whirled Chestnut-Grey round and round. Then, streaking like a tongue of flame past her window, he took a great leap and placed a kiss on the honey-sweet lips of Tsarevna Lovely. And the Tsarevna struck his brow with her signet-ring and left her mark there.

The people roared: "Hold him! Stop him!" but Ivan and his steed were gone in a cloud of dust.

Off they galloped to the open field, and Ivan climbed into Chestnut-Grey's left ear and came out of his right, and lo!—he got back his proper shape again. Then he let Chestnut-Grey run free and himself went home, stopping to gather some mushrooms on the way. He entered the house, bound his forehead with a rag, climbed up on to the stove ledge and lay there as before.

By and by his brothers arrived and began telling him where they had been and what they had seen.

"Many were the wooers of the Tsarevna, and handsome, too," they said. "But one there was who outshone them all. He leapt up on his fiery steed to the Tsarevna's window and he kissed her lips. We saw him come, but we did not see him go."

Said Ivan from his perch behind the chimney:

"Perhaps it was me you saw."

His brothers flew into a temper and said:

"Stop your silly talk, fool! Sit there on your stove and eat your mushrooms."

Then Ivan untied the rag that covered the mark left there by the Tsarevna's signet-ring, and at once a bright glow lit up the hut. The brothers were frightened and cried:

"What are you doing, fool? You'll burn down the house!"

The next day the Tsar held a feast to which he summoned all his subjects, boyars and nobles and common folk, rich and poor, young and old.

Ivan's brothers, too, prepared to attend the feast.

"Take me with you, my brothers," Ivan begged.

"What?" they laughed. "You will only be mocked at by all. Stay here on your stove and eat your mushrooms."

The brothers then mounted their goodly steeds and rode away, and Ivan followed them on foot. He came to the Tsar's palace and seated himself in a far corner. Tsarevna Lovely now began to make the rounds of all the guests. She offered each a drink from the cup of mead she carried and she looked at their brows to see if her mark was there.

She made the rounds of all the guests save Ivan, and when she approached him her heart sank, for he was covered with soot and his hair stood on end.

Said Tsarevna Lovely:

"Who are you? Where do you come from? And why is your brow bound with a rag?"

"I hurt myself in falling," Ivan replied.

The Tsarevna unwound the rag, and a bright glow at once lit up the palace.

"That is my mark!" she cried. "Here is my betrothed!"

The Tsar came up to Ivan, looked at him and said:

"Oh no, Tsarevna Lovely! This cannot be your betrothed! He is all sooty and very plain."

Said Ivan to the Tsar:

"Allow me to wash my face, Tsar."

The Tsar gave him leave to do so, and Ivan came out into the courtyard and shouted as his father had taught him to:

"Chestnut-Grey, hear and obey! I call thee nigh to do or die!"

And lo and behold!—Chestnut-Grey came galloping towards him. The earth shook under his hoofs, his nostrils spurted flame, and clouds of smoke poured from his ears. Ivan climbed into his right ear and came out of his left, and lo!—he turned into a youth as fair as the sky at dawn, the handsomest youth that ever was born. The people in the palace all gave a great gasp when they saw him.

No words were wasted after that.

Ivan married Tsarevna Lovely, and a merry feast was held to celebrate their wedding.

IVAN THE PEASANT'S SON AND THE THREE CHUDO-YUDOS

A Russian Fairy Tale



Long, long ago, in a certain tsardom, in a certain realm there lived an old man and an old woman who had three sons, the youngest of whom was called Ivan. They were not idle, they loved to toil, from morn till night they tilled the soil.

One day evil tidings spread through the realm. It was rumoured that Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters was planning to fall upon the land, to kill all the people and to burn down all the towns and villages. The old man and the old woman began to grieve and to sorrow, and their two elder sons said, trying to comfort them:

"Do not grieve, Mother, do not grieve, Father! We will go against Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters, and we will fight him to the death! And that you may not be lonely, Ivan will stay with you. He is too young to do battle."

"No," said Ivan, "I do not want to stay at home and wait for you. I, too, will go to fight Chudo-Yudo!"

The old man and the old woman did not try to stop him from going.

They got their three sons ready for their journey, and the brothers took their heavy cudgels, filled their sacks with bread and other simple fare, and, climbing on their goodly horses, set out from home.

Whether they were long on the way or not no one knows, but by and by they met an old man.

"Good morrow, good youths!" said the old man.

"Good morrow, grandfather!"

"Whither are you bound?"

"We are on our way to do battle with Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters and to defend our native land!"

"Yours is a worthy cause! Only it is not cudgels you need to fight Chudo-Yudo but swords of Damascus steel."

"Where are we to get them, grandfather?"

"That I will tell you. Ride straight ahead, good youths, till you reach a tall mountain. Now, in that mountain there is a deep cave, the entrance to which is blocked by a large rock. Roll the rock aside, enter the cave, and there you will find the swords."

The brothers thanked the old man and rode straight ahead as he had told them to. By and by they saw a tall mountain with a large grey rock resting against one side of it. The brothers pushed the rock away and entered the cave, and what did they see inside but weapons of all kinds without count or number! They each took a sword and then rode on again.

"The old man has done us a great kindness and many thanks to him," said they. "It will be far easier for us to fight with these swords!"

On and on they rode until they came to a village. They looked, and there was not a soul in sight. Except for one small hut, everything had been burnt and razed to the ground. The brothers entered the hut, and whom did they see there but an old woman lying on the stove ledge and groaning.

"Good morrow, grandmother!" the brothers said.

"Good morrow, good youths! Whither are you bound?"

"We are going to the Cranberry Bridge that spans the Currant River. We want to do battle with Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters that he may not invade our land."

"Ah, my good youths, yours is a worthy cause! The blackhearted monster plunders and kills and lays waste wherever he appears. And that is what he has done in our parts. I alone am left alive."

The brothers spent the night at the old woman's house, and early in the morning they rose and set off again on their journey.

They rode up to the Currant River and the Cranberry Bridge, and

they saw that the river bank was strewn with broken swords and bows and the bones of men. An empty hut stood nearby, and it was there they decided to stop.

"Listen to me, my brothers," said Ivan. "We have come to a far and a strange land, and we must be wary and listen to every sound. Let us take turns watching so that Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters may not cross the Cranberry Bridge."

On the first night the eldest brother went out to keep watch. He walked along the bank and he looked out across the Currant River. All was quiet, no one was to be seen and nothing was to be heard. So he lay down under a broom bush and at once fell asleep and began snoring loudly.

As for Ivan, he lay in the hut sleepless and could not so much as doze. And when midnight had passed, he took his sword of Damascus steel and went to the Currant River. He looked, and there under a bush lay his elder brother, fast asleep, snoring mightily. But Ivan did not wake him. Instead, he hid under the Cranberry Bridge and stood there guarding the crossing.

Suddenly the waters of the river began to seethe and to boil, and the eagles began screaming in the oak-trees, and Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters, he of the six heads, came riding up. He rode out to the middle of the Cranberry Bridge, and his horse stumbled under him, the black raven perching on his shoulder flapped its wings, and the black dog that ran behind him bristled.

Said Chudo-Yudo, he of the six heads:

"Why do you stumble, my steed? Why do you flap your wings, black raven? Why do you bristle, black dog? Do you sense the presence of Ivan the Peasant's Son? But he has not yet been born, and even if he has, he is as nothing beside me. I will pick him up in one hand and crush him with the other!"

At this Ivan the Peasant's Son stepped out from under the bridge.

"Do not boast, Chudo-Yudo, you black-hearted monster!" cried he. "You have not yet shot the bright falcon, so do not try to pluck his feathers! You know me not for the goodly youth I am, so sneer not at me! Rather match your strength with mine, and let him who overcomes the other boast to his heart's content."

They came together then, and their swords clashed, and the earth around them trembled and droned. And it was Chudo-Yudo who had the worst of it, for Ivan the Peasant's Son cut off three of his heads at one blow.

"Stay, Ivan the Peasant's Son!" cried Chudo-Yudo. "Let me rest!"

"Nay, there can be no talk of resting now! You, Chudo-Yudo, have three heads, and I have only one. When you have but one head left, then shall we rest."

They came together again and fought hard, and Ivan the Peasant's Son smote off Chudo-Yudo's three remaining heads. Then he hacked his body into small pieces, threw them into the Currant River, laid the six heads beneath the Cranberry Bridge and himself returned to the hut and went to bed.

In the morning his eldest brother came into the hut, and Ivan saw him and asked:

"Well, did you see anything?"

"No," replied the other, "not even a fly flew past me."

And to this Ivan said not a word.

On the second night the middle brother went out to keep watch. He walked here and he walked there, he looked to all sides of him and decided that all was quiet. So he crawled into a clump of bushes, curled up on the ground and fell asleep.

But Ivan relied no more on him than on his eldest brother. When midnight had passed, he at once got ready, and, taking his sharp sword, went down to the Currant River. He hid himself underneath the Cranberry Bridge and waited.

Suddenly the waters began to seethe and to boil, and the eagles began screaming in the oak-trees, and Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters, he of the nine heads, came riding up. He rode out on to the Cranberry Bridge, and his horse stumbled under him, the black raven perching on his shoulder flapped its wings, and the black dog that ran behind him bristled. Chudo-Yudo raised his whip and brought it down on the horse's flanks, the raven's feathers and the dog's ears.

"Why do you stumble, my steed?" cried he. "Why do you flap your wings, black raven? Why do you bristle, black dog? Do you sense the presence of Ivan the Peasant's Son? But he has not yet been born, and even if he has, fight me he cannot, for I will crush him with one finger!"

At this Ivan the Peasant's Son leapt out from under the Cranberry Bridge.

"Stay, Chudo-Yudo!" cried he. "Boast not before we have crossed swords. We shall see who will vanquish whom!"

And Ivan fell on Chudo-Yudo, he flourished his sword of Damascus steel once and then again and he smote off six of the monster's heads. Then Chudo-Yudo struck Ivan a blow and drove him knee-deep into the damp soil. But Ivan the Peasant's Son scooped up a fistful of sand

and dashed it into his foe's fiery eyes, and while the monster, blinded, was trying to get the sand out, Ivan chopped off his three remaining heads. Then he hacked his body into small pieces, threw them into the Currant River, and, putting the monster's nine heads underneath the Cranberry Bridge, returned to the hut, lay down there and fell asleep just as if nothing had happened.

Morning came, and the middle brother stepped into the hut and woke him.

"Well, did you see anything during the night?" Ivan asked him.

"No," the other replied. "Not a fly flew past me, nor a gnat."

"Well, if that is so, then come with me, my dear brothers," said Ivan, "and I will show you both the gnat and the fly."

And Ivan led his brothers under the Cranberry Bridge and showed them the two monsters' heads.

"Those are the flies and gnats that fly about here at night," said he. "And you, my brothers, are not made to fight battles but to warm your bones on a stove ledge."

The two brothers dropped their heads in shame.

"We were overpowered by sleep," said they.

On the third night Ivan himself prepared to go out to keep watch.

"A fearful battle have I before me," said he. "You, my brothers, must not sleep, but listen for my whistle. As soon as you hear it, send my horse to me and hasten to my side."

So saying, Ivan the Peasant's Son went to the Currant River, stood underneath the Cranberry Bridge and waited.

No sooner had midnight passed than the earth began trembling and swaying, the river waters seething and boiling, the wild winds howling, the eagles in the oak-trees screaming, and Chudo-Yudo the Monster of Monsters, he of the twelve heads, rode out to the Currant River. All Chudo-Yudo's twelve heads were whistling and all twelve were spurting flame. Twelve wings had Chudo-Yudo's steed, and his hair was of copper and his mane and his tail of iron. Chudo-Yudo rode on to the Cranberry Bridge, and at once his horse stumbled under him, and the black raven perching on his shoulder flapped its wings, and the black dog that came behind him bristled. And Chudo-Yudo brought down his whip on the horse's flanks, the raven's feathers and the dog's ears.

"Why do you stumble, my steed?" cried he. "Why do you flap your wings, black raven? Why do you bristle, black dog? Do you sense the presence of Ivan the Peasant's Son here? But he has not yet been born, and even if he has, he cannot stand up against me. I have only to blow once, and not so much as a handful of dust will be left of him."

At this Ivan the Peasant's Son stepped out from under the Cranberry Bridge.

"Wait, and do not boast, Chudo-Yudo," cried he, "else will you be sorely shamed!"

"Ah, it's you, Ivan the Peasant's Son! What brings you here?"

"I have come to feast my eyes on you, you villainous monster, and to test your courage!"

"Test my courage indeed! You are as a fly beside me!"

Said Ivan the Peasant's Son:

"I have not come here to beguile you with tales, nor indeed to listen to yours. I have come to fight you to the death, cursed monster, and to deliver all good folk from your presence!"

And Ivan the Peasant's Son brandished his sharp sword, and he smote off three of Chudo-Yudo's heads. But Chudo-Yudo caught them up, and, swishing his fiery finger over them, set them back on their necks, and they at once grew fast to them, just as if they had never been cut off at all.

By then Ivan was in a sorry state, for Chudo-Yudo deafened him with his whistling, burned him with his fiery tongues, showered him with sparks and drove him knee-deep into the damp soil.

"Perhaps you would rest a while, Ivan the Peasant's Son?" he jeered.

"Speak not of rest," Ivan replied. "To use my sword without sparing my strength—that is my way!"

Thereupon he gave a loud whistle and flung his right glove at the hut where his brothers were sleeping. The glove smashed all the windows, but the brothers slept on and heard nothing.

Then Ivan the Peasant's Son summoned all his strength, brandished his sword more fiercely than ever and chopped off six of Chudo-Yudo's heads. But Chudo-Yudo caught them up, and, swishing his fiery finger over them, set them back on their necks, and they grew fast to them, just as if they had been there all the time. Then he fell upon Ivan the Peasant's Son and drove him waist-deep into the damp soil.

Ivan now realised that he was in desperate straits. He took off his left glove and flung it at the hut, but though it broke the roof, the two brothers slept on and heard nothing.

Then Ivan the Peasant's Son brandished his sword a third time, and he smote off nine of Chudo-Yudo's heads. But Chudo-Yudo caught them up, and, swishing his fiery finger over them, set them back on their necks, and they grew fast to them again. After that he hurled himself upon Ivan the Peasant's Son and drove him shoulder-deep into the damp soil.

But Ivan pulled off his hat and threw it at the hut, and the hut shook and swayed at the blow and almost crashed to the ground. Only then did the brothers wake, and they heard Ivan's horse neighing loudly and trying to break loose from the chains with which he was tethered.

They rushed to the stable, untied the horse and themselves ran after him.

Ivan's horse galloped up to his master and began kicking out at Chudo-Yudo with his hoofs. And Chudo-Yudo let out a whistle and a hiss and showered the horse with sparks.

Ivan the Peasant's Son heaved himself out from the ground, cut off Chudo-Yudo's fiery finger and then began chopping off his heads. Soon there was not one left! After that he cut up his body into small pieces and threw them into the Currant River.

Just then the two elder brothers came running up.

"What a sorry pair you are!" Ivan said. "I nearly paid with my life for your loving to sleep so much."

The two brothers led him to the hut and washed him, they gave him food and drink and then put him to bed.

In the morning Ivan rose early and began to dress.

"Why are you up so early?" his brothers asked. "You are in need of rest after so fierce a battle."

"Nay, I cannot rest," said Ivan. "I lost my belt by the Currant River and must go there to look for it."

"What's the need!" the brothers replied. "We can go into town, and you'll buy yourself a new belt."

"No, I want my old belt back!"

And Ivan made off alone for the Currant River. But he did not stop to look for his belt. He went across to the opposite bank by way of the Cranberry Bridge and stole unnoticed to the stone palace of the Chudo-Yudos. He crept to an open window and he crouched under it, listening, for he wanted to hear if any evil plan were being hatched there.

He looked, and he saw, sitting inside the palace, the wives of the three Chudo-Yudos and the old she-dragon, their mother. They sat there and they talked among themselves.

Said the wife of the first Chudo-Yudo:

"I will wreak vengeance on Ivan the Peasant's Son, for it was he who killed my husband! I will run ahead of them when he and his brothers are on their way home, I will make the heat of day impossible to bear and will turn myself into a well. They will thirst for a drink of water, but will drop dead at the first sip!"

"That is rightly said," quoth the old she-dragon.

Said the wife of the second Chudo-Yudo:

"And I will run ahead of them and turn into an apple-tree. They will each of them want to eat an apple, but will drop dead at the first bite!"

"That is rightly said, too," quoth the old she-dragon again.

Said the wife of the third Chudo-Yudo:

"As for me, I will put a sleep spell on them and then run ahead and turn into a soft carpet with silken cushions. The brothers will want to lie down and rest, and they will be burnt to cinders!"

"And that too is no less rightly said," quoth the she-dragon. "But if you three fail to do them to death, then I will turn myself into a huge sow, and, catching them up, devour all three!"

Ivan the Peasant's Son heard their talk and hurried back to his brothers.

"Well, have you found your belt?" they asked him.

"I have."

"And was getting it back worth the waste of time?"

"It was, my brothers, it was."

Thereupon, the three brothers got ready and set off homewards. They rode across meadows and they rode across fields, and the day was so parching hot that they felt they had to have a drink of water or perish. They looked about them and saw a well nearby with a silver dipper floating on the top. Said the two elder brothers to Ivan:

"Let us stop, Ivan, and have some cool water to drink, and water our horses too."

"Who knows but that the water in that well may be foul," Ivan rejoined.

And jumping down from his horse, he lay about him with his sword, hacking down and chopping up the well. At this a terrible howling and shrieking arose from it, a sudden fog came down, the heat abated, and they were thirsty no longer.

"Now you see, my brothers, what kind of water was in the well," said Ivan.

They rode on, and no one knows whether a long or a short time passed, but by and by they saw an apple-tree laden with large, rosy apples.

The two elder brothers sprang from their horses and made to pluck the apples. But Ivan was quicker than they. He lay about him with his sword and chopped away at the apple-tree's very roots, and the apple-tree began shrieking and howling.

"Now, my brothers, do you see what kind of apple-tree this is? The

apples growing on it are not for our palates!" said Ivan.

And the three of them mounted their horses again and rode on.

They rode for a long time, and they felt very tired. They looked about them, and there in the field lay a soft, bright carpet, with silken cushions on it.

"Let us lie down on the carpet and rest our weary bones," the two elder brothers said.

"No, my brothers, you will not find that carpet soft," Ivan told them.

At this the two elder brothers became very angry.

"Why do you preach to us?" they asked. "We are not to do this and not to do that!"

But Ivan said not a word in reply. He took off his belt and threw it on the carpet, and the belt flared up and was burnt to a cinder.

"That is what would have happened to you, too," said Ivan to his brothers.

He went closer and began hacking up the carpet and the cushions with his sword. He cut them up into shreds, flung them away and said:

"You should not have grumbled or found fault with me, my brothers. For the well, the apple-tree and the carpet were not what they seemed but the wives of the three Chudo-Yudos. They wanted to do us to death, but perished themselves instead!"

The brothers rode on, and whether they rode for a long or a short time no one knows, but all of a sudden the sky grew very dark, the wind began howling and the earth trembling and humming, and they saw a huge sow running after them. She was about to swallow Ivan and his brothers, but they, not being foolish, scooped up handfuls of salt from their sacks and threw them straight into her gaping maw.

The sow was overjoyed, for she thought that she had caught Ivan the Peasant's Son and his two brothers, and she stopped and began chewing *the salt*. But feeling by the taste of it what it was, she rushed off again after them.

She gnashed her teeth, and her bristles stood on end as she ran, and *she was soon at their heels and about to catch them up.*

Seeing the sow, Ivan told his brothers that they must make things hard for her by riding in three different directions, and this they did, one of them riding to the right, one to the left, and Ivan himself, straight ahead.

The sow was getting close to them now, but she did not know which of them to go after first and stopped.

While she stood there hesitating and wagging her snout, Ivan rushed at her, lifted her high and then dashed her to the ground with all his

might. The sow crumbled to dust, and the dust was scattered by the wind.

From then on no monsters, dragons or serpents were ever again seen in those parts, and the people knew no more fear.

As for Ivan the Peasant's Son and his two brothers, they went back home to their mother and father, and they all lived happily ever after. They ploughed their fields, sowed their wheat and had plenty of good things to drink and to eat.

A TRIAL LIKE NO OTHER

A Russian Fairy Tale



Once there lived two brothers. One of them was poor and the other rich.

Now, one day the poor brother ran out of firewood, he had nothing to heat his stove with, and it was very cold in his hut.

He went to the forest and chopped some wood, but he had no horse to bring it home.

"I'll go to my brother and ask him for a horse," said he to himself.

He went to his brother, but it was a cold welcome his brother gave him.

"You can take the horse this once, but see that you don't make the load too heavy," said he. "And don't think you can come to me for anything of the sort again. It's always one thing today and another tomorrow, and you'll have me out begging in the streets before I know where I am."

The poor brother led the horse home and only then remembered that he had forgotten to ask for a horse collar.

"It's no use going back for it now, my brother will not give it to me," said he to himself.

So he tied the sledge as tight as he could to the horse's tail and drove to the forest.

On the way back the sledge got wedged in a tree stump, but the poor man did not notice it and gave the horse a touch of the whip.

The horse was a fiery one; it plunged ahead, and lo!—its tail came off.

When the rich brother saw that his horse had lost its tail, he began cursing and scolding the poor brother.

"You've ruined my horse!" he cried. "Don't think I will leave it at that!"

And he complained to the judge about him.

A short time passed by and a long time, and the brothers were summoned to court.

They set off for town, they walked and they walked, and the poor brother said to himself:

"A poor man fighting a rich man's lawsuit is like a weak man wrestling with a strong man: win he cannot. They're sure to find me guilty."

Just then they were crossing a bridge, and as the bridge had no handrail, the poor brother slipped and fell off. Now, it so chanced that at that very moment a merchant was driving over the icebound river below, taking his old father to a doctor, and the poor brother fell straight on top of the old man and killed him outright without himself being injured.

The merchant seized the poor brother and held him.

"Come with me to the judge!" he cried.

And so now the three of them, the two brothers and the merchant, went on together.

The poor brother felt more sad than ever.

"They'll be sure to find me guilty now," he said to himself.

Suddenly he saw a heavy stone on the road. He picked it up, wrapped it in a rag and thrust it inside his coat.

"As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," said he to himself. "If the judge judges unfairly and I am found guilty, I'll kill him as well."

They came before the judge, and the judge set about the business of judging and began asking questions.

And the poor brother would glance at the judge now and again, take out the stone wrapped in the rag and whisper:

"Judge away, Judge, judge away, but see what I've brought to court today!"

He said it once, and he said it again, and he said it a third time, and the judge watched him and said to himself:

"Could the man be showing me a nugget of gold?"

And he looked at him once again and was tempted.

"Even if it's only silver it will still bring in quite a handsome sum of money," thought he.

And he passed sentence and ruled that the tailless horse be given to the poor brother to keep till its tail grew out again.

And to the merchant he said:

"As punishment for having killed your father this man must stand on the ice under the very same bridge, and you must leap on him from the bridge and kill him the way he killed your father."

And with that the trial ended.

Said the rich brother to the poor brother:

"Oh, well, so be it, I'll take the tailless horse from you."

"Oh no, brother," the poor man replied. "Let it be as the judge said. I'll keep your horse until its tail grows out again."

Then the rich brother began pleading with the poor one.

"I'll give you thirty rubles, only give me back my horse," said he.

"Very well, let it be as you wish," the poor brother agreed.

The rich brother counted out the money, and the matter was settled between them.

Now the merchant, too, spoke in pleading tones.

"Let's forget the whole affair, my good man," said he. "I forgive you. It will not bring back my father if I don't, anyway."

"No, no, come along and do as the judge said. Jump down on me from the bridge."

"I don't want to kill you. Let us be friends and I will give you a hundred rubles," the merchant begged.

The poor man took the hundred rubles and was about to leave, when the judge called him to his side.

"Now give me what you promised," said he.

The poor man drew the bundle from his coat, turned back the rag and showed the judge the stone.

"That is what I showed you when I said: 'Judge away, Judge, judge away, but see what I've brought to court today!' Had you judged differently, I would have killed you with this stone."

"It's a good thing I judged the way I did," said the judge to himself, "or I would not have been alive now."

As for the poor man, he went home in high spirits, singing a song at the top of his voice.

PEA-ROLL ALONG

A Ukrainian Fairy Tale



There once lived a man who had six sons and one daughter, Olenka by name. One day the sons went out to plough and they told their sister to bring them their dinner to the field.

"How will I find you there?" Olenka asked.

Said the brothers:

"We will dig a furrow stretching from the hut to the patch we will be ploughing. You will find us if you follow it."

And with that they drove away.

Now, in the forest beyond the field there lived a Dragon, and he came and filled in the furrow the brothers had made with earth and made a furrow of his own, which led to the door of his house. And when Olenka went to take her brothers' dinner to them she followed it, walked straight into the Dragon's courtyard, and was at once seized by the Dragon.

In the evening the brothers came home and they said to their mother:

"We were ploughing all day. Why didn't you send us anything to eat?"

"But I did!" the mother replied. "I sent Olenka to the field with your dinner, and I thought she would be coming back with you. She must have lost her way."

"We must go and look for her," the brothers said.

They set out at once, all six of them, and followed the Dragon's

furrow to his courtyard. They came in through the gate, and there was their sister running out to meet them.

"Oh, my brothers, my dear brothers, where will I hide you?" Olenka cried. "The Dragon is out now, but he will eat you up when he comes back!"

And lo!—there was the Dragon flying toward them and hissing like the serpent he was.

"I smell a man, I smell many men!" called he. "Well, now, my lads, is it to fight me you have come or to make peace with me?"

"To fight you!" they called back.

"Very well, then, let us go to the iron threshing floor."

They went to the iron threshing floor, but they did not fight long. For the Dragon struck them once and drove them into the floor. Then he pulled them out, more dead than alive, and threw them into a deep dungeon.

The mother and father waited for their sons to return, but they waited in vain.

One day the mother went to the river with her washing. She looked, and there, rolling toward her along the road, she saw a tiny pea. She picked it up and ate it, and in due time a son was born to her and they called him Pokati-Goroshek or Pea-Roll Along.

Pea-Roll Along grew very fast, he grew and he grew, and though young in years, was big and strong.

One day his father and he were digging a well, and their spades struck a stone. It was a huge stone, and the father went to call his neighbours to help him lift it. But Pea-Roll Along had lifted it and thrown it out by himself before he was back. The neighbours came and looked and were amazed and frightened too, for they saw that Pea-Roll Along was much stronger than any of them. Indeed, so frightened were they that they wanted to kill him. But Pea-Roll Along tossed the stone up into the air and then caught it, and, seeing this feat of strength, they ran away.

The father and son went on digging. They dug till their spades struck a huge piece of iron, and Pea-Roll Along lifted it out and hid it.

Some time passed, and one day Pea-Roll Along asked his parents if it was true that he had six brothers and a sister.

"Indeed it is, son," the parents said. "But they went away once and never returned." And they told him the whole story.

"I will go in search of them," said Pea-Roll Along.

The mother and father began pleading with him not to.

"Don't do it, son," they said. "Your brothers went to seek your sister,



and all six of them perished, and you, all alone as you are, will fare no better."

"No, no, I will!" said Pea-Roll Along. "They are my own flesh and blood and I must find out what happened to them."

And he took the piece of iron he had found to the blacksmith.

"Forge me a sword, and the bigger it will be the better!" said he.

And the blacksmith forged him a sword so large and heavy that it was as much as anyone could do to carry it out of his shop. But Pea-Roll Along lifted it easily and hurled it high into the air.

"I will now have a sleep," said he to his father. "Wake me in twelve days' time, when the sword comes flying back."

He went to bed and slept for twelve days, and on the thirteenth day the sword came flying back, making a humming sound as it flew. The father woke him, Pea-Roll Along sprang up and held up a finger, and the sword struck it and split in two.

"I cannot go to seek my brothers and sister with so poor a sword," said Pea-Roll Along. "I must have another."

And picking up the broken sword, he took it to the blacksmith.

"Forge me a new sword out of this one," said he. "Make one to suit a man as strong as I!"

The blacksmith forged him a sword that was even bigger than the first, and Pea-Roll Along flung it high into the air and then went to bed and slept for another twelve days. On the thirteenth day the sword came flying back, humming as it flew and making the earth quake and tremble. The mother and father woke Pea-Roll Along who sprang to his feet and held up a finger, and the sword struck it but did not break and only bent a little.

"Here is a good sword indeed!" said Pea-Roll Along. "Now I can go to seek my brothers and sister. Bake me some bread, Mother, and make some rusks, and I will set out on my way."

He took his sword and a bagful of rusks, and, bidding his mother and father goodbye, set forth from home.

He followed the Dragon's old furrow, which was barely to be seen, and was soon deep in the forest, and he walked on and on till he came to a fenced-in courtyard that surrounded a large house. He walked into the yard and on into the house, and he found his sister Olenka there.

"Good morning, lass!" said Pea-Roll Along, who didn't know it was his sister.

"Good morning to you, good youth! Why have you come here? The Dragon is out, but he will soon be back and will eat you up," Olenka said.

"We shall see! Perhaps he won't. But who are you, lass, and why are you here?"

"I used to live with my mother and father, but the Dragon carried me off, and though my six brothers tried to free me, they did not succeed."

"Where are your brothers?" Pea-Roll Along asked.

"The Dragon threw them into a dungeon, and I do not know if they are alive or dead."

"Perhaps I can free you," said Pea-Roll Along.

"My brothers, and there were six of them, could not do it, so how can you!"

"We shall see what we shall see!" said Pea-Roll Along.

And he sat down by a window and waited.

By and by the Dragon came flying back. He flew into the house and he twitched his nose.

"I smell a man!" cried he.

"Of course you do, for here I am!" said Pea-Roll Along, coming forward.

"And what brings you here, my lad? Do you want to fight me or to make peace with me?"

"To fight you!" Pea-Roll Along cried.

"Well, then let us go to the iron threshing floor."

"Let's!"

They came to the iron threshing floor, and the Dragon faced Pea-Roll Along.

"You strike first," he said.

"No, you do!" said Pea-Roll Along.

They crossed swords, and the Dragon struck Pea-Roll Along such a blow that he sank ankle-deep into the iron threshing floor. But Pea-Roll Along was out again in a flash and he brandished his sword and gave the Dragon an answering blow that drove him knee-deep into the iron threshing floor. The Dragon heaved himself out and he again came at Pea-Roll Along and drove him as deep into the floor as he had just been driven himself. But Pea-Roll Along was not one to be frightened, and he struck the Dragon a blow which drove him waist-deep into the floor, and then another that killed him on the spot.

He then made his way to the dungeon, freed his brothers who were more dead than alive, and, taking them and his sister Olenka with him and all the gold and silver in the Dragon's house, too, set out for home. But he never told them that he was their brother.

Whether they were long on the way or not nobody knows, but by and by they sat down for a rest under an oak-tree, and so tired was Pea-Roll

Along after his battle that he fell fast asleep. And his six brothers talked it all over among themselves and said:

"People will laugh at us when they learn that the six of us could not do away with the Dragon while this young lad here did it all by himself. And he will get all the Dragon's riches besides."

And they decided to bind Pea-Roll Along while he was asleep and helpless to the oak-tree and leave him there to be devoured by wild beasts.

No sooner said than done. They bound Pea-Roll Along to the tree, left him there and went away.

And Pea-Roll Along slept on and felt nothing. He slept for a day and he slept for a night, and he woke to find himself bound to the oak-tree. But he jerked and heaved, and lo!—out came the tree, roots and all, from the ground, and Pea-Roll Along threw it over his shoulder and went home. He came up to the house and he heard his brothers talking to their mother.

"Did you have any more children, Mother, after we left home?" they asked her.

"Yes, indeed!" the mother replied. "I had a son, Pea-Roll Along by name, who went off to seek you."

"Then it must have been he we bound to the oak-tree! We had better go back at once and untie him!" the brothers said.

But Pea-Roll Along brandished the oak he was carrying and struck the roof of the hut so hard with it that the hut all but crumbled to the ground.

"Stay where you are since you are what you are and no better, my brothers!" he cried. "I will go off by myself and roam the wide world."

And he shouldered his sword and set out on his way.

On and on he walked and he saw two mountains ahead of him. Between them stood a man who had his hands and his feet set against them and was trying to push them apart.

"Good morning, friend!" Pea-Roll Along called out.

"Good morning to you!" the man replied.

"What are you doing?"

"Moving the mountains apart to make a path."

"Where are you going?"

"To see the world and make my fortune."

"I am out to do the same! What is your name?"

"Move-Mountain. What's yours?"

"Pea-Roll Along. Let's go together!"

"Let's!"

They went along together, they walked and they walked, and they saw a man in the forest who was pulling out oak-trees by their roots. And he had only to give a tree one twist, and out it came!

"Good morning, friend!" called Pea-Roll Along and Move-Mountain.

"Good morning to you, my lads!" the man called back.

"What are you doing?"

"Uprooting trees in order to make a path."

"Where are you going?"

"To seek my fortune."

"We are out to do the same. What's your name?"

"Twist-Oak. What are yours?"

"Pea-Roll Along and Move-Mountain. Let's go together!"

"Let's!"

So the three of them went on together. They walked and they walked, and by and by they saw a man sitting on the bank of a river. The man had the longest of long whiskers, and he had only to twirl one of them for the waters to part and roll away, leaving a path and thus enabling all who wanted to to walk over the river bed.

"Good morning, friend!" they called to him.

"Good morning to you, my lads!"

"What are you doing?"

"Parting the waters in order to cross the river."

"Where are you going?"

"To seek my fortune."

"We are out to do the same. What's your name?"

"Twirl-Whisker. What are yours?"

"Pea-Roll Along, Move-Mountain and Twist-Oak. Let's go together!"

"Let's!"

They went on together and had an easy time of it, for Move-Mountain moved aside every mountain, Twist-Oak uprooted every forest and Twirl-Whisker parted the waters of every river that lay in their path.

They walked and they walked, and they came to a small hut standing in the middle of a large forest. They stepped inside, and—would you believe it—there was no one there.

"Here's where we will spend the night," said Pea-Roll Along.

They spent the night in the hut, and in the morning Pea-Roll Along said:

"You stay at home, Move-Mountain, and cook our dinner for us, and we three will go hunting."

They went away, and Move-Mountain cooked a big dinner and lay down for a sleep. Suddenly there came a rap at the door: rap-tap-tap!

"Open the door!" someone called.

"I'm no servant of yours to open doors!" Move-Mountain called back.

The door opened, and the same voice called again:

"Carry me over the threshold!"

"You're no lord of mine, so don't wail or whine!" Move-Mountain called back.

And lo!—there climbed over the threshold the tiniest old man that ever was seen, with a beard so long that it trailed over the floor. The little old man caught Move-Mountain by the hair and hung him on a nail on the wall. Then he ate all there was to eat and drank all there was to drink, and, after cutting a long strip of skin from Move-Mountain's back, went away.

Move-Mountain twisted and turned on the nail till he broke loose, and then he set to work cooking dinner anew. He was still at it when his friends returned.

"Why are you so late getting dinner?" they asked.

"I dozed off and forgot all about it," said Move-Mountain.

They ate their fill and went to bed, and on the following morning Pea-Roll Along said:

"Now you stay at home, Twist-Oak, and the rest of us will go hunting."

They went away, and Twist-Oak cooked a big dinner and lay down for a sleep. Suddenly there came a rap at the door: rap-tap-tap!

"Open the door!" a voice called.

"I'm no servant of yours to open doors!" Twist-Oak called back.

"Carry me over the threshold!" the same voice called again.

"You're no lord of mine, so don't wail or whine!" Twist-Oak replied.

And lo!—there climbed over the threshold and stepped into the hut the tiniest old man that ever was seen, with a beard so long that it trailed over the floor. He caught Twist-Oak by the hair and hung him on a nail, and then he ate all there was to eat and drank all there was to drink, and, after cutting a long strip of skin from Twist-Oak's back, went away.

Twist-Oak twisted and turned this way and that till he succeeded in breaking free, and then he at once set to work cooking dinner anew.

He was still at it when his friends returned.

"Why are you so late getting dinner?" they asked.

"I dozed off and only woke a little while ago," said Twist-Oak.

But Move-Mountain said nothing, for he knew what had happened.

On the third day Twirl-Whisker was the one to remain at home, and the same thing happened to him.

Said Pea-Roll Along:

"You are indeed slow getting dinner, all three of you! Tomorrow you'll go hunting, and I'll stay home."

Morning came, and Pea-Roll Along remained at home while his three friends went hunting. He cooked a big dinner, and just as he lay down for a sleep there came a rap at the door: rap-tap-tap.

"Open the door!" someone called.

Pea-Roll Along opened the door, and there before him was the tiniest old man that ever lived, with a beard so long that it trailed over the floor.

"Carry me over the threshold, my lad!" said the little old man.

Pea-Roll Along picked him up, carried him into the hut, and set him down on the floor, and the little old man began dancing round and round and taking little flying jumps at him.

"What do you want?" asked Pea-Roll Along.

"You'll soon see what I want!" said the little old man, and, stretching out his hand, he was about to seize Pea-Roll Along by the hair, but Pea-Roll Along cried out: "Ah, that's the sort you are!" and caught him by the beard instead.

Then, taking an axe, he dragged the little old man to an oak-tree, split the oak-tree in two and thrust the little old man's beard into the cleft, pinning it fast.

"You were mean enough to try and catch me by the hair," said he to the little old man, "so now you'll have to stay here till I return."

He went back to the hut, and he found his three friends waiting for him there.

"Is dinner ready?" they asked.

"Yes, it's been ready and waiting a long time," Pea-Roll Along replied.

They sat down and began eating, and after they had finished Pea-Roll Along said:

"Come with me and I will show you a most unusual sight!"

He led them outside, but, oddly enough, there was no oak-tree there and no little old man, either. For the little old man had pulled out the oak-tree by the roots and dragged it away with him.

Pea-Roll Along then told his friends of all that had happened to him, and they, on their part, confessed that the little old man had had them hanging from a nail and had cut strips of skin from their backs.

"He's a wicked old thing, the little old man is, and we had better go and find him," said Pea-Roll Along.

Now, the little old man had been dragging the oak-tree and had left a trail they found easy to follow, and it led them to a hole in the ground so deep that it seemed bottomless.

Pea-Roll Along turned to Move-Mountain.

"Climb down the hole, Move-Mountain!" he said.

"Not I!" answered Move-Mountain.

"How about you, Twist-Oak, or you, Twirl-Whisker?"

But neither Twist-Oak nor Twirl-Whisker would risk climbing down the hole.

"Very well, then, I'll do it!" said Pea-Roll Along. "Let's plait a rope!"

They plaited a rope, and Pea-Roll Along wound one end of it round his hand.

"Now let me down!" he said.

They began letting him down, and it took them a long time, for so deep was the hole that to reach its bottom was like trying to reach the nether world. But they got him down at last, and Pea-Roll Along set out to explore the place. On and on he walked, and there before him was a huge palace. He came inside, and everything there sparkled and shone, for the palace was made of gold and precious stones. He passed from chamber to chamber, and all of a sudden who should come running toward him but a princess, and so beautiful was she that no pen could describe her and no tongue sing her praises.

"What brings you here, good youth?" she asked.

"I am looking for a little old man with a beard that trails over the ground," said Pea-Roll Along.

"Ah," said she, "the little old man has got his beard stuck in the cleft of an oak-tree and is trying to pull it out. Don't go to him or he will kill you as he did many others before you."

"He won't kill me," said Pea-Roll Along. "It was I who stuck his beard in the cleft. But who are you and what are you doing here?"

"I am a princess and the daughter of a king. The little old man carried me off and is keeping me captive here," the princess said.

"I will free you, never fear! Just take me to him."

The princess led Pea-Roll Along to the little old man, and lo!—there he sat, stroking his beard which he had pulled out of the cleft. At the sight of Pea-Roll Along the little old man turned red with anger.

"What brings you here—have you come to fight me or to make peace with me?" he asked.

"I am here to fight you!" said Pea-Roll Along. "Do you think I would make peace with the likes of you?"

They crossed swords then, and they fought long and fiercely till at last Pea-Roll Along struck the little old man hard and killed him.

After that Pea-Roll Along and the princess took all the gold and gems they could find in the palace, and, filling three sacks full of them, made

for the hole down which Pea-Roll Along had climbed into the underground kingdom.

They came to it soon enough, and Pea-Roll Along began calling to his friends.

"Are you still there, my brothers?" he cried.

"We are!" came the reply.

Pea-Roll Along tied one of the sacks to the rope.

"Pull it up, brothers!" he cried again. "The sack is yours!"

They pulled up the sack and let down the rope, and Pea-Roll Along tied the second sack to it.

"Pull it up! This one is yours too!" he called.

He sent up the third sack as well, and then he tied the princess to the rope.

"The princess is mine!" he called.

The three friends pulled out the princess, and now only Pea-Roll Along was left at the bottom of the hole.

"Let's pull him up a little way and then let go of the rope," said they. "He will be killed, and the princess will be ours."

But Pea-Roll Along guessed what they were up to and tied a large stone to the rope.

"Now pull me up!" he called.

They pulled up the rope and then let go of it, and down came the stone with a crash!

"A fine lot of friends I have!" said Pea-Roll Along, and he set out to roam the kingdom at the bottom of the hole. On and on he walked, and all of a sudden the sky became overcast and the rain came down, and hail, too. Pea-Roll Along hid under an oak-tree, and as he stood there he heard the chirping of baby eagles coming from a nest at the top of the tree. He climbed the tree, and, taking off his coat, covered the eagles with it.

The rain stopped, and a huge eagle, the nestlings' father, came flying up.

"Who was it that covered you, my little ones?" asked he.

"We'll tell you if you promise not to eat him up," said the nestlings.

"Never fear, I won't!"

"Well, do you see that man sitting under the tree? It was he who did it."

The eagle flew down from the tree.

"Ask of me whatever you want, and I will do it," said he to Pea-Roll Along. "This is the first time that none of my children has drowned in such a downpour, with me away."

"Take me to my own kingdom," said Pea-Roll Along.

"That is not easy to do, but if we take six barrels of meat and six of water with us I may be able to do it," the eagle said. "Every time I turn my head to the right you will throw a piece of meat into my mouth, and every time I turn it to the left you will give me a sip of water. If you don't do it we'll never get there, for I'll die on the way."

They took six barrels of meat and six of water, Pea-Roll Along put them on the eagle's back and climbed on himself, and away they flew! And whenever the eagle turned his head to the right, Pea-Roll Along would put some meat into his mouth, and whenever he turned it to the left he would give him a sip of water.

They flew for a long time and had nearly reached Pea-Roll Along's kingdom when the eagle turned his head to the right again. Pea-Roll Along looked into the barrel, the last of the six, and, seeing that there was not a scrap of meat left there, he cut off a piece of his own leg and gave it to him.

"What was it I just ate?" the eagle asked. "It was very good."

"A piece of my own flesh," Pea-Roll Along replied, pointing to his leg.

The eagle said nothing, but he spat out the piece of meat, and, leaving Pea-Roll Along to wait for him, flew off to fetch some living water. He was back with it before long, and no sooner had they put the piece that he had cut off to Pea-Roll Along's leg and sprinkled it with the water than it grew fast to it again.

After that the eagle flew home, and Pea-Roll Along went to seek his three faithless friends.

Now, the three had made their way to the palace of the princess's father, and were now living there and quarrelling among themselves, for each wanted to marry the princess and would not give her up to the others.

It was there that Pea-Roll Along found them, and when they saw him they turned white with fright.

Said Pea-Roll Along:

"My own brothers betrayed me, so what can I ask of you! I think I'll have to forgive you."

And forgive them he did.

Soon after that he married the princess and the two of them lived happily together ever after.

GOOD AND EVIL

A Ukrainian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived two brothers, one of whom was rich and the other poor. One day they came together and fell to talking, and the poor brother said:

"Cruel as life is, still it's better to do good than evil."

"What an idea!" cried the rich brother. "There's no such thing as good in the world nowadays, but only evil. To do good will get you nowhere."

But the poor brother stood his ground.

"No, brother," said he, "I still think it pays to do good."

"Very well, then," said the rich brother. "Let's lay a wager and go and ask the first three people we meet what they think. If they say that *you* are right, then everything I have will be yours. But if they say that *I* am right, then I will take all you have for myself."

"So be it!" agreed the poor man.

They went along the road, they walked and they walked, and they met a man who was coming back from a place where he had spent the season working.

"Greetings, friend!" said they, coming up to him.

"Greetings to you!"

"There's something we want to ask you."

"Go ahead!"

"Which do you think is the better way to live: by doing good or evil?"

"Where can you find good these days, kind folk!" the man replied. "Look at me. I worked long and I worked hard, but my earnings amounted next to nothing, and even so the master managed to fleece me of a part of them. No, there's no living honestly. Better to do evil than good!"

"Well, what did I tell you, brother!" said the rich man. "I am right, and you are wrong."

The poor man's spirits fell, but there was nothing to be done, and the two of them went on. By and by they met a merchant.

"Greetings, honest merchant!" said they.

"Greetings to you!" the merchant replied.

"There is something we want to ask you."

"Go ahead!"

"Which do you think is the better way to live: by doing good or evil?"

"What a question, kind folk! To do good doesn't pay! If you want to sell something, you have to lie and cheat a hundred times over. There is no selling anything otherwise."

And with that he rode on.

"There, I am right the second time!" the rich man said.

The poor man became sadder than ever, but there was nothing to be done, and so they went on again. They walked and they walked, and they met a lord.

"Greetings, Your Lordship!" said they.

"Greetings to you!"

"There is something we want to ask you."

"Go ahead!"

"Which do you think is the better way to live: by doing good or evil?"

"What a question, kind folk! There is no such thing as good in the world these days, and there's no living honestly. If I were to follow the ways of righteousness, why, I—" And without finishing what he had to say, the lord rode on.

"Well, now, brother," the rich man said. "Let us go home. You must turn over to me all you have!"

The poor man went home, deeply grieved. And the rich man took away all his humble belongings and only left him his hut.

"You can stay in your hut for the time being," said he. "I don't need it now. But you'll have to look for another place to live in soon."

The poor man sat in the hut with his family, and there was not a piece of bread or anything else for them to eat and nowhere to earn any money, for it was a bad year for crops. The poor man tried to bear this

state of affairs, and he did for a time, but when his children began crying from hunger, he took a sack and went to the rich brother to ask for flour.

"Give me a measure of flour or of grain, any you can spare," said he. "There is nothing to eat in the house, my children are going hungry!"

Said the rich brother:

"You can have a measure of flour if you let me put out your eye."

The poor man thought it over, and he knew there was no way out but to agree.

"So be it," said he. "Put it out, and may God be with you, only give me some flour, for Christ's sake!"

So the rich man put out the poor man's eye and gave him a measure of mouldy flour. The poor man brought it home, and his wife took one look at him and gasped.

"What has happened to you, where is your eye?" she asked.

"My brother put it out," said he.

And he told her all about it. They cried and they sorrowed for a time, but they had to eat the flour, for it was all the food they had.

A week passed or perhaps a little over a week, and the flour was all gone. So the poor man took his sack and went to see his brother again.

"Do please give me some more flour, my dear brother," said he. "The flour you gave me last time is all gone."

"I'll give you a measure if you let me put out your eye," the rich brother replied.

"How can I live without both my eyes, brother! You have put one out already. Be merciful and give me the flour without blinding me."

"Oh no, I won't, I'll only give it to you if you let me put out your other eye."

The poor man had no choice.

"Go ahead and put it out, then, and may God be with you," said he.

So the rich brother put out his poor brother's second eye and filled his sack with flour. And the blind man took it and went home.

He walked with the greatest difficulty, stumbling and groping his way from one wattle fence to another, but he finally reached his house, bringing the flour with him. His wife looked at him and her blood froze.

"How will you live without your eyes, you poor, unhappy man!" cried she. "Who knows but we might have got some flour elsewhere, but now..."

And she wept so, poor woman, that she could not utter another word.

Said the blind man:

"Do not cry, wife! I am not the only blind man in the world. There are many like me and they manage to live without their eyes."

But a measure of flour is not much for a family, and soon the last of it was gone.

"I won't ask my brother for any more food, wife," the blind man said. "Take me to the large poplar on the road beyond the village and leave me there for the day. And in the evening you can come for me and take me home. Many people pass that way on foot and on horseback; surely someone will give me a piece of bread."

So his wife led the man where he had asked her, seated him under the poplar and returned home.

The blind man sat there and of the people who passed him there were some who gave him a penny or two, but soon it was getting on towards evening and his wife did not come. The blind man was tired and he decided to go home by himself, but he turned off in the wrong direction and instead of getting to his house walked on and on without knowing where he was going. Suddenly he heard the trees rustling all around him, and he knew that he was in a forest and would have to spend the night there. But, fearing the wild beasts, he climbed a tree, a feat he managed with difficulty, and sat there motionless.

Midnight struck, and all of a sudden, to the selfsame spot under the selfsame tree, the evil spirits came flying, and the most important one among them, who was their chief, began asking them what they had been doing.

"I made one brother blind another for two measures of flour," said one.

"You did well, but not well enough," the chief of the evil spirits told him.

"Why not?"

"Because the blind brother has only to rub his eyes with the dew that is under this tree, and he will see again."

"But no one knows anything about it, so blind he will stay!" laughed the other.

Said the chief of the evil spirits, turning to another of them:

"Now you tell me what you did."

"I drained all the wells in a village, leaving not a drop of water, so now the villagers have to walk forty miles to get to a well, and there's many that drop dead on the way."

"You did well, but not well enough."

"Why not?"

"If the large rock that lies in the town nearest the village is moved

from its place, enough water will gush from under it to serve the needs of all."

"But no one knows anything about it, so they will get no water."

"And what of you, what did you do?" the chief of the evil spirits asked yet another of them.

"I blinded the only daughter of a Tsar, and the doctors can do nothing to help her."

"You did well, but not well enough."

"Why not?"

"One has only to rub her eyes with the dew that is under this tree, and she will see again."

"But no one knows anything about it, so blind she will stay."

The blind man sat in the tree and heard everything that was being said, and when the evil spirits had flown away, he climbed down, rubbed his eyes with the dew, and lo!—he could see again.

"Now I will go and help other people," said he to himself.

He gathered some dew, put it into a small flask he had with him and set off on his way.

He came to the village where there was no water, and he saw an old woman carrying two pails on a yoke.

"Do please give me a drink of water, grandmother," said he.

"I'm sorry, my son," the old woman replied, "but the well is forty miles away, and by the time I get home I'll have spilled a good half of the water. And mine is a large family, they might die of thirst!"

"Never mind. As soon as I come to your village there will be enough water for all," he told her.

The old woman gave him a drink of water, and so happy was she that she rushed to the village to share the good news with everyone. The villagers did not know whether to believe her or not, but they all came running to meet the man.

"Save us from the cruel death that awaits us, kind stranger," they said.

"I'll try," said he. "Take me to the town nearest your village."

They took him to the town, and he looked here and he looked there and at last he found the rock the evil spirits had spoken about.

Then the people set to all together, and they lifted the rock and moved it from its place. And that same moment the water gushed from under it! It ran in a wide stream and filled all the springs and made all the lakes and rivers full and deep.

The people were overjoyed, and they thanked the man and gave him a good sum of money and many gifts.

The man got on a horse and rode away, and whenever he met anyone, he asked them to show him the way to the tsardom the evil spirits had spoken about.

Whether he was long on the way or not no one knows, but he finally reached this tsardom, and, riding up to the Tsar's palace, said to the servants:

"I have heard that the daughter of the Tsar is very ill, but I think that I may be able to cure her."

"Oh no!" said they. "The best doctors could do nothing to help her, so how can you!"

"You had better tell the Tsar about me all the same." And so insistent was he that they finally did as he asked.

The Tsar at once summoned him to the palace.

"Can you really cure my daughter?" he asked.

"I can," the man replied.

"If you do, you shall have whatever you ask for."

They took the man to the chamber where the Tsarevna lay, he rubbed her eyes with the dew he had brought, and lo!—she could see again.

The Tsar's joy was such that no words can describe it, and he gave the man so many riches that a whole train of carts was used to carry them away.

Meanwhile, the wife, who did not know where her husband was, was grieving and sorrowing. She was beginning to think him dead when lo!—there he was, knocking at the window.

"Open the door, wife!" he called.

The wife was overjoyed. She ran out and opened the door for him and made to lead him into the hut, for she thought that he was blind.

"Bring a lighted splinter!" said he.

She brought the splinter, she looked at him and she threw up her hands in surprise, for there he stood, with his sight regained!

"God be thanked!" cried she. "How did it happen, tell me?"

"Wait a bit, wife, let us first carry in what I have brought with me."

They carried in what he had brought, and he was now so rich that the rich brother's riches were as nothing compared with his.

They began living in style, and the rich brother heard about it and came running to see them.

"How did it happen, brother, that you got back your sight and became rich?" asked he.

And the other made no secret of it and told him everything there was to tell.

And now the rich brother was eager to become richer still, so when night came, he stole into the forest, climbed the selfsame tree and sat there very quietly.

Suddenly, on the stroke of midnight, the evil spirits, their chief at their head, came flying up.

Said the evil spirits:

"What can it mean! No one knew anything and no one heard anything, and yet the blind brother has regained his sight, the water has been let out from under the rock, and the Tsarevna has been cured. Perhaps someone eavesdrops on us?"

They rushed about looking for the culprit and climbed the tree, and there the rich man sat! So they pounced on him and tore him to bits.

THE WOLF, THE DOG AND THE CAT

A Ukrainian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived a Peasant who had a Dog. While the Dog was young he guarded his master's house, but when he grew old his master drove him out. The Dog roamed the steppe, caught mice and any other little animals he could find there and ate them.

One night the Dog saw a Wolf coming toward him.

"Hullo, Dog!" the Wolf said.

The Dog made a polite reply, and the Wolf asked:

"Where are you going, Dog?"

"While I was young," the Dog explained, "my master was quite fond of me, for I watched over his house. But when I grew old, he drove me out."

"You must be hungry, Dog," said the Wolf.

"I am, very," replied the Dog.

"Then come with me, and I will feed you."

So off the Dog went with the Wolf. Now, their way lay across the steppe, and by and by the Wolf saw a herd of sheep at pasture and said to the Dog:

"Go and see who those creatures are, grazing there."

The Dog went and looked and he soon came running back.

"Those are sheep," he said.

"A plague on them! If we try to eat them, we'll have our teeth full of wool and nothing but empty bellies to show for it. Let us go further, Dog!"

So on they went, and by and by the Wolf saw a flock of geese in the steppe.

"Go and see who those creatures are, browsing there," he said to the Dog.

The Dog went and looked and he soon came running back.

"Those are geese," he said.

"A plague on them! If we try to eat them, we'll have our teeth full of feathers and nothing but empty bellies to show for it. Let us go further!"

So on they went, and by and by the Wolf saw a horse at pasture.

"Go and see who that creature is, feeding there," he said.

The Dog went and looked and he soon came running back.

"That is a horse," he said.

"Good. He will be ours!" said the Wolf.

So they ran towards the horse, and the Wolf pawed at the ground and gnashed his teeth, all to make himself very angry.

Said he to the Dog:

"Tell me, Dog, is my tail quivering?"

And the Dog looked and said that indeed it was.

"And now," said the Wolf, "see if my eyes have grown bleary."

"Indeed they have," the Dog said.

Then the Wolf sprang up and he seized the horse by the mane, dashed him to the ground and tore him to pieces. And he and the Dog began to feast on the horse's flesh. The Wolf was young and soon filled his belly, but the Dog was old and he gnawed and gnawed and still ate hardly anything. Other dogs ran up and drove him away.

The Dog set off down the road again, and, coming towards him, he saw a Cat as old as himself, who was roaming the steppe in search of mice.

"Hullo, there, Brother Puss!" said the Dog. "Where are you going?"

"I am going wherever the road takes me. When I was young, I served my master by catching mice. But when I grew old and slow and my sight dimmed, my master stopped feeding me and turned me out of the house. So now here I am knocking about the world."

"Then come along with me, Brother Puss," said the Dog, "and I will feed you." For the Dog had decided to do just what the Wolf had done.

So the Dog and the Cat set off down the road together.

By and by the Dog saw a herd of sheep at pasture and he said to the Cat:

"Go and see who those creatures are, grazing there, Brother Puss."

The Cat went and looked and he soon came running back.

"Those are sheep," he said.

"A plague on them! We'll have our teeth full of wool and nothing but empty bellies to show for it. Let us go further!"

So on they went, and by and by the Dog saw a flock of geese in the steppe.

Said he to the Cat:

"Run and see who those creatures are, browsing there, Brother Puss!"

The Cat went and looked and he soon came running back.

"Those are geese," he said.

"A plague on them! We'll have our teeth full of feathers and nothing but empty bellies to show for it."

And the two of them went on. They walked and they walked, and by and by the Dog saw a horse at pasture.

Said the Dog:

"Run and see who that creature is, feeding there, Brother Puss."

The Cat went and looked and he soon came running back.

"That is a horse," he said.

"Good!" said the Dog. "We'll kill him and have enough food and to spare."

So the Dog began to paw at the ground and to gnash his teeth, all to make himself very angry.

Said he to the Cat:

"See if my tail is quivering, Brother Puss."

"No, it isn't," the Cat replied.

Then the Dog began to paw at the ground again to make himself very angry indeed.

Said he to the Cat:

"Isn't my tail quivering now, Brother Puss? Say that it is!"

The Cat looked and said:

"Well, yes, it is, just a wee bit."

"Watch and see, we'll soon get the better of the horse!" said the Dog.

And he began to paw at the ground again.

"See if my eyes have grown bleary, Brother Puss," said he after a while.

"No, they haven't," the Cat replied.

"That's a lie! You must say that they have."

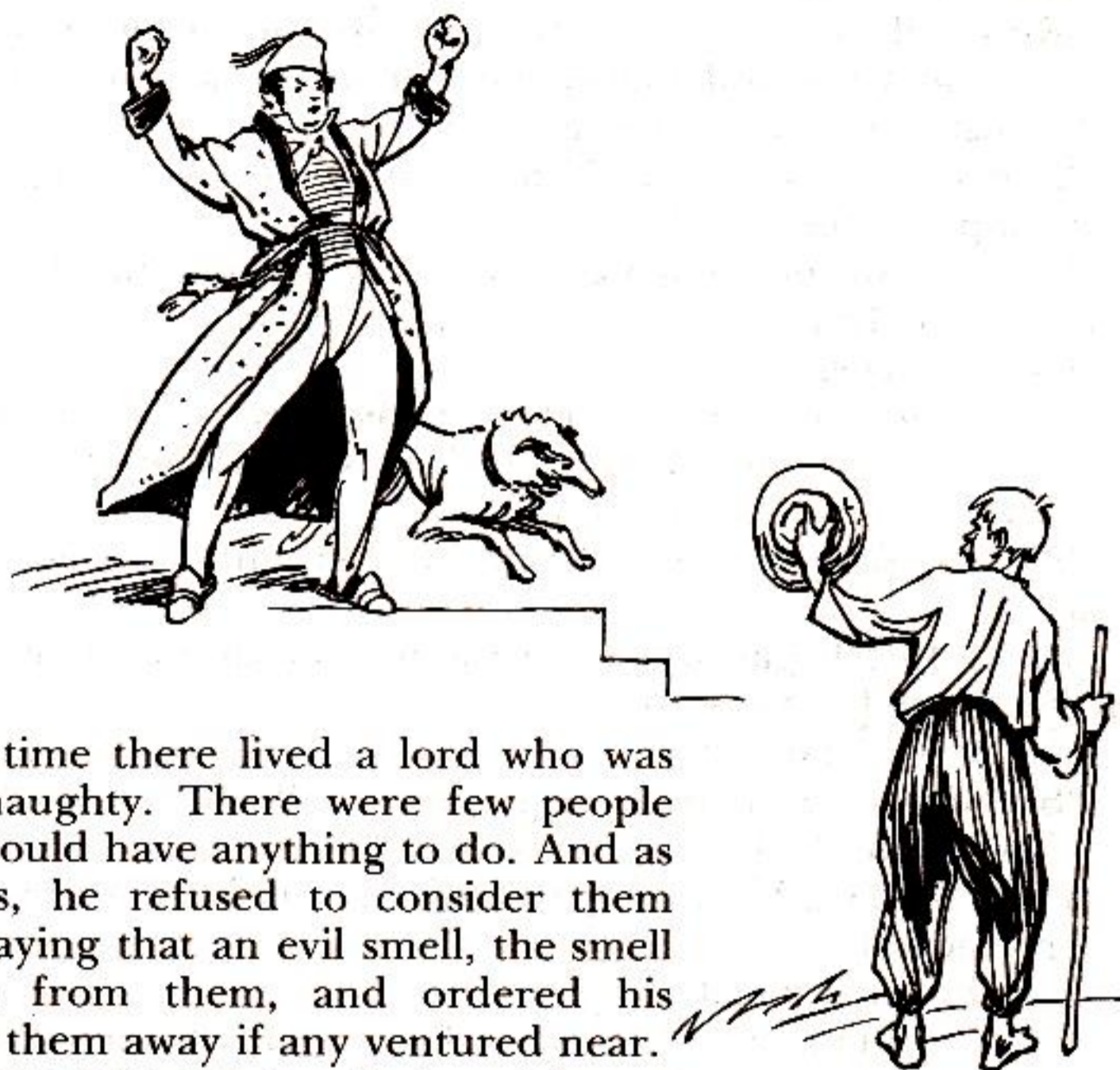
"Very well, they have grown bleary if you say so, I don't mind," said the Cat.

Then the Dog flew into a temper and he fell on the horse. But the horse kicked out with his hoofs and he struck the Dog on the head! The Dog fell to the ground and his eyes popped out. And the Cat ran up to him and said:

"Ah, Brother Dog, now your eyes have indeed grown bleary!"

HOW A MUZHIK DINED WITH A LORD

A Ukrainian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived a lord who was both rich and haughty. There were few people with whom he would have anything to do. And as for the muzhiks, he refused to consider them human beings, saying that an evil smell, the smell of earth, came from them, and ordered his servants to drive them away if any ventured near.

One day the muzhiks got together and began talking about the lord.

"I saw the lord quite close, I met him in the field," said one.

"And I looked over the fence yesterday and saw the lord having coffee on the balcony," said another.

Just then a third muzhik, the poorest of the poor, came up, and, hearing them, laughed.

"Pooh, that's nothing," said he. "Anyone could peek at the lord over the fence. If I so wish, I will dine with him!"

"You—dine with him?" laughed the first two muzhiks. "Why, the moment he sees you he'll have you driven out! He won't even let you near the house!"

And the two muzhiks began jeering at the third one and calling him names.

"You're a liar and a braggart!" cried they.

"I am not!"

"Well, if you dine with the lord, you'll get three sacks of wheat and two bullocks from us, but if you don't, you'll do everything we tell you to do."

"Very well," the muzhik replied.

He came into the lord's courtyard, and when the lord's servants saw him they rushed out of the house and made to drive him out.

"Wait!" the muzhik said. "I have good tidings for the lord."

"What are they?"

"That I will tell to no one but the lord himself."

So the lord's servants went to the lord and told him what the muzhik had said.

The lord felt curious, for the muzhik had not come to ask for anything, but to bring news. Perhaps, said he to himself, it was something that might prove useful.

"Show in the muzhik!" said he to his servants.

The servants let the muzhik into the house, and the lord came out to him and asked:

"What tidings do you bring?"

The muzhik glanced at the servants.

"I should like to talk with you in private, my lord," said he.

By now the lord's curiosity was thoroughly aroused—for what could the muzhik have to tell him?—and he ordered the servants to leave him.

Said the muzhik in an undertone as soon as they were alone:

"Tell me, gracious lord, what might be the cost of a piece of gold as big as a horse's head?"

"What do you want to know that for?" asked the lord.

"I have my reason."

The lord's eyes gleamed and his hands began to shake.

"It's not for nothing that the muzhik asks me such a question," said he to himself. "He must have found a treasure."

And he began trying to worm out an answer from the muzhik.

"Tell me, my good man, why do you want to know such a thing?" he asked again.

Said the muzhik with a sigh:

"Well, if you don't wish to tell me, you needn't. And now I must be going, for my dinner is waiting for me."

The lord forgot to be haughty. He was fairly trembling with greed.

"I'll outwit this muzhik," thought he, "and get the gold away from

him." And he said: "Look here, my good man, why should you hurry home? You can have dinner with me if you are hungry. Come, servants, make haste and set the table, and don't forget the vodka!"

The servants at once set the table and served vodka and food, and the lord began to regale the muzhik and offer him this and that.

"Eat and drink your fill, my good man, don't stand on ceremony!" said he.

And the muzhik did not refuse and ate and drank heartily, while the lord kept heaping his plate and refilling his glass.

Said the lord when the muzhik had eaten till he could eat no more:

"And now go quickly and bring me your piece of gold! I'll know much better than you how to dispose of it, and you'll get ten rubles in reward."

"No, my lord, I won't bring you the gold," the muzhik said.

"Why ever not?"

"Because I haven't got it."

"What?! Then why did you want to know the cost of it?"

"Just out of curiosity!"

The lord fell into a great passion. He went purple in the face and he stamped his feet.

"Get out of here, fool!" cried he.

Said the muzhik in reply:

"I am not the fool you think me, O most gracious lord! I had my bit of fun at your expense, and I have won my wager of three sacks of wheat and two round-horned bullocks into the bargain. It takes brains to do that!"

And with that he went away.

THE MAGIC FIDDLE

A Byelorussian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived a boy who began playing a pipe when he was very young. He would cut himself a reed while tending bullocks, make a pipe out of it and begin to play, and the bullocks would stop nibbling the grass, prick up their ears and listen. Hearing him, the birds in the forest would grow quiet and even the frogs in the swamps would stop croaking.

He would go off to tend the horses at night, and it would be all gaiety and merriment in the meadows, with the lads and lasses singing and joking, as young people should. The night would be beautifully warm, and the ground fairly steaming.

The boy would start playing his pipe, and all the lads and lasses would grow quiet at once. And it would seem to each that a kind of balm was soothing his aching heart, and an unknown force lifting him up and up to the very stars in the sky.

The herdsman would sit there without stirring, forgetful of their weary limbs and empty stomachs.

And each felt he could spend a lifetime sitting there and listening.

The music would stop, but no one dared to so much as move from his place lest he frighten away the magical voice that was like the voice of a nightingale.

Then the pipe would play again, a sorrowful tune this time, and

sadness and melancholy would descend on all. Men and women, on their way late at night from their master's fields, would stop and listen to it, and their lives would rise before them, the poverty and the suffering, the cruelty of the lord, the judge and the stewards. And their hearts would be so heavy that they would long to give voice to their sadness in loud lamentations as one does for a dear departed soul or for a son sent off to the wars.

But the sad tune would change to a gay one, and the listeners would throw down their scythes, rakes and pitchforks and, arms akimbo, begin to dance.

The men and the women, the horses and the trees, the stars and the clouds in the sky—the whole world would dance and make merry.

So great was the piper's power that he could do with the human heart as he wished.

When he grew to manhood, the piper made himself a fiddle and with it roamed the land. Wherever he went he would play his fiddle, and he was dined and wined and treated as the most welcome of guests.

For many a long day the fiddler wandered over the land, a joy to good folk. But he was as a thorn in the side to the lords, for wherever he went the bondsmen stopped obeying them.

There came a day when the lords decided to kill the fiddler, but they could find no one willing to do it. For the peasants loved him, and the stewards thought him a sorcerer and were afraid.

Then the lords called up the demons from the nether world—everyone knows that lords and demons are tarred with the same brush—and together they plotted against him.

One day, when the fiddler was walking in the forest, the demons sent twelve wolves against him. The wolves stood in the fiddler's path, they gnashed their teeth and their eyes glowed like coals. And the fiddler, who had nothing with him save his fiddle, thought that his end had come, and, wishing to make music for the last time, he lifted the fiddle and drew the bow across the strings.

The fiddle spoke out like a living thing, and the forest rang with music. The bushes and trees became still, not a single leaf stirred on them, and the wolves stood frozen to the spot, listening, their hunger forgotten.

And when the music stopped, the wolves moved off as in a dream to the depths of the forest.

The fiddler walked on. The sun was setting beyond the forest, its golden rays flecking the tops of the trees, and not a sound could be heard.

The fiddler sat down on the bank of a river, took out his fiddle and began to play. And so well did he play that earth and sky gave ear to him and seemed ready to listen forever. Then he struck up a gay polka, and lo!—the stars began whirling and dancing like snow during a snowstorm, the clouds floated across the sky, and the fish leapt and thrashed about, making the water in the river seethe and boil.

The king of the water sprites himself joined in the dancing, and he cut such capers that the river overflowed its banks.

The demons were frightened and bounded out of their backwaters, but though they gnashed their teeth in fury, there was nothing they could do.

Now the fiddler, seeing that the king of the water sprites was flooding the people's fields and gardens, stopped playing, put the fiddle into his bag and went on his way.

All of a sudden two young lords came up to him.

"We have a ball tonight," said they. "Come and play for us, fiddler, we will pay you well."

The fiddler thought it over and decided to do as they asked. For the night was dark, and he had nowhere to sleep, and no money, either.

"Very well, I'll play for you," said he.

The young lords brought the fiddler to a palace, and so many young lords and ladies had gathered there that there was no counting them.

Now, on the table stood a large bowl, and the lords and ladies, one after another, kept running up to it and each would thrust a finger into the bowl and then pass it over his eyes.

The fiddler followed suit, and as soon as he had passed his finger over his eyes, he saw to his wonder that the palace was not a palace at all, but the nether world itself, and the lords and ladies, devils and witches.

"Oh, so that's the kind of ball it is!" said the fiddler to himself. "Just you wait, all, I'll play you a fine tune!"

So he lifted his fiddle and drew his bow over the strings, and everything around him turned to dust. And as for the devils and witches, they were scattered far and wide and were never seen again!

WHY THE BADGER AND THE FOX LIVE IN HOLES

A Byelorussian Fairy Tale



Rumour has it that in olden times only the Lion, the tsar of the beasts, had a tail. None of the other animals, wild or tame, had one and it was a poor life they led. They got along somehow in winter, but when summer came, the flies and midges gave them no peace, for they could not chase them off! Many were the animals bitten to death by gadflies and breezes. Once they fell on them there was just nothing they could do to save themselves.

Now, the Lion learned of this and, wishing to help them, sent out a summons for all the animals to come to him that he might present them with tails.

The Tsar's messengers rushed to all ends of the realm. Like the wind they flew, on the trumpets they blew, and they beat on a drum—dum-dee-dum! They saw the Wolf and they told him of the Tsar's summons. They saw the Bull and the Badger and they told them about it. And they called the Fox, the Marten, the Hare, the Elk, the Wild Boar and even the Bear whom they found in his lair fast asleep and had to shake awake.

But whoever heard of the Bear hurrying! He went along slowly, tramp-a-tramp, a single step at a time, letting his gaze stray to all sides of him, and kept sniffing the air. All of a sudden he looked, and there before him, in the hollow of a lime-tree, he saw a beehive.

"The road to the Tsar's palace is long," said the Bear to himself. "I had better have something to eat to help me along."

And he climbed the tree and found the hollow as full of honey as could be! With a growl of delight he began scraping it out and cramming himself full. By and by, feeling that he had had enough, he looked at himself and found that his coat was all sticky with honey and pieces of honeycomb.

"How can I show myself to the Tsar now?" the Bear asked himself.

He went to the river, washed his coat and lay down on a hillside to dry. And the sun was so warm that before he knew where he was he was fast asleep and snoring gently.

Meanwhile the animals were beginning to gather at the Lion's palace. The first to come was the Fox. She looked around her, and there, in front of the palace, she saw a whole heap of tails: long and short ones, bushy and hairless ones. The Fox bowed to the Lion.

"O most Radiant Majesty!" said she. "I was the first to come at your call, and so I beg you to allow me to take for myself the tail I like best."

Now, the Lion cared not a whit which tail the Fox would get.

"Very well," said he, "you may choose a tail to your liking."

So the Fox, who was very sly, went through the whole heap of tails, and, choosing the most beautiful one of all, rushed away with it before the Tsar had had time to think better of his generosity.

Soon afterwards the Squirrel came hopping up, and she picked herself a tail that was quite as fine as the Fox's but smaller. The next to come was the Marten, and he too made off with a handsome, bushy tail.

The Elk picked the longest of the tails with a thick brush at the end of it with which to wave away the gadflies and breezes, and the Badger took one that was broad and thick.

The Horse chose a tail that was all hair and nothing much else. He stuck it on, swept it over his right side and then over his left, and, seeing that the flies were now an easy target for him, whinnied in delight.

"This'll mean the death of all flies!" said he, and he galloped off to his paddock.

The last to come running up was the Hare.

"Where have you been?" the Tsar asked him. "All I have left is a tiny little tail."

"It will do for me nicely, thank you," said the Hare happily. "A little tail is as good as any other. It won't be in the way when I'm running from a wolf or a dog!"

And the Hare stuck his wisp of a tail to the place where it belonged, gave a hop and another and ran home.

And the Lion, having now given away all the tails, went to bed.

As for the Bear, he awoke only towards evening, and it was then that he remembered that he had to hurry if he was to get a tail at all. He looked, and there was the sun rolling down the sky beyond the forest. So he lumbered off on all fours for all he was worth. He ran so hard, poor soul, that he was soon in a sweat. He rushed up to the Lion's palace, and lo!—not a tail did he see, for not one was left.

"What am I going to do now?" the Bear asked himself. "Everyone will have a tail except me."

And the Bear turned back and tramped off again to his own forest as angry as could be! He moved slowly along, and by and by whom did he see but the Badger who was twisting and turning on a tree stump and admiring his handsome tail.

"Look here, Badger," said the Bear, "you don't really need a tail, do you? Give it to me!"

"What strange notions you have, Bear!" the Badger returned, taken aback. "Who would want to part with such a beautiful tail!"

"Well, if you won't give it to me of your own free will, I'll take it away by force!" the Bear roared, laying his heavy paw on the Badger's tail.

"You shan't have it!" the Badger cried, and he wrenched himself free with all the strength he had in him and broke into a run.

The Bear looked, and there, clinging to his claws, was a piece of the Badger's coat and the very tip of his tail. He threw the piece of coat away, and, sticking on the bit of tail, went off to finish the honey in the tree hollow.

As for the Badger, he was so frightened that he did not know what to do with himself. No matter where he hid it always seemed to him that the Bear would come at any moment and take the rest of his tail away. So he dug out a large hole in the ground and made his home there. The wound on his back healed and only a long dark stripe was left to show where it had been. And it has never grown any lighter since.

One day the Fox came scuttling near, she looked, and she saw a hole in the ground from which came loud snores. She squeezed into the hole, and lo!—there was the Badger, fast asleep.

"Isn't there enough room for you up on top, neighbour," asked the Fox in surprise, "that you have hidden yourself here, under the ground?"

"No, Foxy dear, there isn't," sighed the Badger. "If it weren't that I have to hunt for food, I would never leave this hole, not even at night."

And the Badger told the Fox why it was he felt there was no room for him above ground.

"Hm," said the Fox to herself, "if the Bear has tried to steal the Badger's tail, then I am in danger of losing mine, for it is a hundred times more handsome."

And she ran off in search of a place in which to hide from the Bear. She searched all the night through, but no such place could she find. At last, towards morning, she dug herself a hole just like the Badger's, scrambled into it, covered herself with her bushy tail and went peacefully to sleep.

And so the Bear was left with nothing but a poor little button of a tail which he boasts to this day. However, he still has a lair for a home, while the Badger and the Fox live in holes.

HOW VASIL VANQUISHED THE DRAGON

A Byelorussian Fairy Tale



Be this tale true or false, let us hear what it has to tell.

To a certain land there once came a most fearful and terrible Dragon. He dug himself out a deep hole close to the side of a mountain and lay down for a rest.

Whether he rested long or not no one can now recall, but the moment he rose he shouted loudly for all to hear:

"Hear me, good folk, hear me, men and wives, you must each of you bring me something good to eat every day: a cow, a lamb, a pig or whatever else you wish! He who does as I say, will live. But he who does not, will die, for him I will devour!"

The people were frightened, and they did as the Dragon bade. And this went on for a long time till at last there came a day when there was nothing left to bring him. But the Dragon would not let a day pass without gorging himself. From village to village he flew, seizing people and carrying them off to his den. And the people went about weeping loudly and trying without success to find a way to deliver themselves from him.

Now, one day a man named Vasil came to those parts. He saw how sad everyone was and was much surprised.

"What's the matter?" asked he. "Why are you all weeping?"

The people told him all about everything.



"Calm yourselves," said Vasil. "I will try to save you from the Dragon."

And taking a heavy cudgel, he went to the forest by the side of the mountain where the Dragon lived.

The Dragon saw him, and, rolling his green eyes, asked:

"Why have you come here with that cudgel?"

"To give you a beating!" Vasil replied.

"My, how brave you are!" said the Dragon. "You had better run away while you still can. For I only have to blow once, and you will be blown clean away from here!"

Vasil smiled.

"Don't you boast, you old scarecrow," said he. "I've known worse monsters than you! We'll see which of us can blow the harder. Go on, blow!"

The Dragon blew so hard that the leaves rained down from the trees and Vasil was thrown to his knees.

"Ha, that's nothing!" said he, springing to his feet. "Why, it's enough to make a cat laugh! Now let *me* try. Only first you must cover your eyes if you don't want them to pop out of your head."

The Dragon tied a kerchief over his eyes, and Vasil came up and struck him such a blow on the head with his cudgel that the sparks flew from them.

"Are you stronger than I am, then?" the Dragon said. "Let's try again and see which of us can crush a rock the faster."

And the Dragon seized a rock weighing all of a hundred poods and squeezed it with his paws so hard that nothing was left of it but dust which rose up in a cloud.

"That's nothing!" laughed Vasil. "Let's see if you can squeeze it so that water will run out of it."

The Dragon was frightened. He was beginning to feel that Vasil was the stronger of the two, and, glancing at Vasil's cudgel, said:

"Ask of me what you will, and you shall have it."

"I don't need anything," Vasil replied. "I have everything a man can wish for, which is more than you have, I'm sure. If you don't believe me, come and see for yourself!"

So they got into a cart and drove off for Vasil's house.

By now the Dragon was becoming very hungry. He saw a herd of bullocks on the edge of a forest and he said to Vasil:

"Go and catch a bullock and we'll have a bite to eat."

And Vasil went to the forest and began stripping bast from the lime-trees. The Dragon waited and waited and at last went to look for him.

"What is taking you so long?" he asked.

"Can't you see that I'm stripping bast from these trees?" Vasil said.

"What do you need bast for?"

"To plait a rope long and strong enough for us to be able to catch five bullocks for dinner."

"What do we need five bullocks for? One is enough."

And the Dragon caught a bullock by the nape of its neck and dragged it to the cart.

"Now go and bring us some firewood so as we can roast the bullock," said he to Vasil.

But instead of doing as the Dragon bade, Vasil walked off a little way, sat down under an oak-tree, rolled a cigarette and began to smoke.

The Dragon waited for him for a long time, and at last, losing patience, went to look for him.

"What is taking you so long?" he asked.

"I think we'll need a dozen oaks or so, so I'm trying to pick the thickest among them."

"What do we want with a dozen oaks? One is enough," said the Dragon, and he pulled out the thickest of the oaks with one twist of his paw.

He roasted the bullock and invited Vasil to join him.

"Go ahead and eat it yourself," said Vasil. "I'll have something at home. What's one bullock for me—just a bite!"

The Dragon ate the bullock and licked his lips. They rode on and soon came to Vasil's house. The children saw their father coming from a distance, and they cried out joyously:

"Father's coming! Father's coming!"

But the Dragon did not catch the words and asked:

"What are the children shouting?"

"They are pleased that I am bringing you home for their dinner. They're very hungry."

By now the Dragon was badly frightened, so he jumped off the cart and took to his heels. But he missed the road and found himself in a swamp. The swamp was very deep, and the Dragon sank in and was drowned. And so that was the end of him.

PILIPKA

A Byelorussian Fairy Tale



Once there lived a man and his wife. They had no children, and the wife was always sorrowing and grieving that she had no one to rock in the cradle and to kiss and fondle.

One day the husband went to the forest, chopped down an alder-tree and brought a log home to his wife.

"Here," said he, "rock this."

The wife put the log in a cradle and she began rocking it and singing as she rocked:

"Little son, rock-a-bye, you are white of body and dark of eye...."

She rocked the log one day, and she rocked it the next, and on the third day she looked, and there, lying in the cradle, was a little baby boy!

The husband and wife were overjoyed. They called their little son Pilipka and began caring for him tenderly.

When Pilipka grew up he said to his father:

"Make me a golden boat, Father, and a silver paddle. I want to go fishing."

And the father made him a golden boat and a silver paddle and sent him to the lake to catch fish.

Pilipka set to fishing in earnest, and he fished whole days and nights on end. Indeed, so well were the fish biting that he would not even go

home, and his mother brought his dinner to him. She would come to the lake and call:

"Pilipka, my son, the day is half done, and here is a pie for you to try!"

And Pilipka would make for the shore, throw the fish he had caught out on to it, and, having eaten his mother's pie, paddle to the middle of the lake again.

Now, Baba-Yaga the Witch with the Switch, hearing how his mother called to Pilipka, decided to kill him.

She took a sack and a poker, came to the lake and called:

"Pilipka, my son, the day is half done, and here is a pie for you to try!"

Pilipka thought that it was his mother calling and paddled to the shore, and Baba-Yaga caught his boat with her poker, dragged it up the bank, and, seizing Pilipka, thrust him into her sack.

"You won't be catching fish any more, my lad!" she cried.

And throwing the sack over her shoulder, she carried it off with her into the forest. But the way to her house being long, she soon grew tired, sat down for a rest and fell asleep. And Pilipka crawled out of the sack, filled it full of stones and went back to the lake again.

Some time passed, and Baba-Yaga woke up, caught up the sack and carried it home with many moans and groans.

She brought it home and she said to her daughter:

"Roast this fisherman of mine for our dinner!"

She shook the sack and shook it again, but nothing but stones dropped out of it.

Baba-Yaga flew into a temper.

"I'll show you how to fool me!" she cried at the top of her voice, and, running to the lake shore again, she began calling to Pilipka:

"Pilipka, my son, the day is half done, and here is a pie for you to try!"

Pilipka heard her and called back:

"I know you well! You are not my mother but Baba-Yaga. My mother's voice is ever so much thinner."

And though Baba-Yaga kept calling to him, Pilipka did not heed her.

"Never you mind," said Baba-Yaga to herself, "I'll make me a thin little voice."

And she ran to a blacksmith.

"Please, blacksmith, sharpen my tongue and make it thinner," said she.

"Very well," replied the blacksmith. "Just put it on my anvil."

So Baba-Yaga stuck out her tongue and laid it on the anvil, and the blacksmith took his hammer and pounded away at it till it became quite thin.

After that Baba-Yaga ran to the lake and she called to Pilipka in a thin little voice:

"Pilipka, my son, the day is half done, and here is a pie for you to try!"

Pilipka heard her and thought it was his mother calling. He paddled to the shore, and Baba-Yaga snatched him up and thrust him into her sack.

"You won't fool me any more!" Baba-Yaga cried, overjoyed, and she took him straight home without stopping to rest. She shook him out of the sack and said to her daughter:

"Here he is, the cheat! Light the stove and roast him."

And with these words she went out again.

And her daughter lit the stove, and, taking a spade, said to Pilipka:

"Lie down on the spade so I can put you in the stove."

And Pilipka lay down on the spade in such a way that his legs stuck up in the air.

"Not like that!" cried Baba-Yaga's daughter. "I won't be able to put you in the stove if you hold your legs up."

Pilipka dropped his legs, letting them hang down over the spade.

"Not like that!" Baba-Yaga's daughter cried again.

"Then how?" Pilipka asked. "Show me!"

"How stupid you are!" exclaimed Baba-Yaga's daughter. "This is the way to do it. Look!"

She stretched herself out on the spade, and Pilipka snatched up the spade and shoved it into the burning stove. After that he closed the stove and put Baba-Yaga's poker against it so that her daughter could not jump out.

He ran out of the hut, and lo!—there was Baba-Yaga coming towards it.

What was Pilipka to do? There was a tall and leafy sycamore-tree growing near the hut, so he climbed it quickly and hid himself amid the branches.

Baba-Yaga came into the hut, she sniffed, and she smelt the smell of roasting meat. She took the roast out of the stove, ate up the meat, and, throwing the bones out into the yard, began rolling over them, saying as she did so:

"On these bones I did fall-fall, o'er these bones I will roll-roll, for I have eaten of Pilipka's flesh and I have drunk of his blood."

And Pilipka called to her from his hiding-place:

"On these bones you may fall-fall, o'er these bones you may roll-roll, for you have eaten of your daughter's flesh and drunk of your daughter's blood."

Baba-Yaga heard him and she turned dark with rage. She ran to the sycamore-tree and began chewing at it. She chewed and she chewed, and she broke her teeth, but the tree stood there and was as tough and strong as ever.

Baba-Yaga ran to the blacksmith.

"Please, blacksmith," cried she, "forge me a steel axe! If you don't, I will eat up your children."

And the blacksmith was frightened and forged her an axe.

Baba-Yaga rushed with it to the sycamore-tree and began chopping it down.

Said Pilipka:

"Strike no tree, but strike a rock!"

Said Baba-Yaga:

"Strike no rock, but strike the tree!"

Said Pilipka again:

"Strike no tree, but strike a rock!"

And the axe suddenly struck a rock and was chipped and blunted.

Baba-Yaga gave a howl of rage, snatched up the axe and went back to the blacksmith's with it to have it sharpened.

Pilipka looked, and he saw that the sycamore-tree was beginning to lean over to one side. Baba-Yaga had chopped it nearly through, and he had to hurry to save himself before it was too late.

Just then a flock of geese came flying over the tree.

"Come, geese, do please each of you give me a feather!" he called to them. "To my mother and father I will fly with you, and there I will pay you for your service true!"

Each of the geese gave him a feather, and of these feathers Pilipka fashioned himself half a wing.

Then a second flock of geese came flying, and Pilipka saw them and called:

"Come, geese, do please each of you throw me a feather! To my mother and father I will fly with you, and there I will pay you for your service true!"

And of these geese too each gave him a feather.

Then a third flock of geese came flying up, and a fourth, and Pilipka was fairly showered with feathers.

He fashioned himself a pair of wings and flew after the geese.



Just then Baba-Yaga came running from the blacksmith's shop, and she began chopping down the sycamore-tree again, making the chips fly to all sides of it.

She chopped and she chopped, and the sycamore-tree fell down on her with a great crash and killed her.

And as for Pilipka, he came flying home with the geese. When his mother and father saw him they were overjoyed. They seated him at the table and gave him many nice things to eat.

And to the geese they gave oats and ale, and that is the end of this long-short tale.

OLD FROST AND YOUNG FROST

A Lithuanian Fairy Tale



Once there lived Old Frost and Young Frost, his son. Young Frost was a terrible braggart. To hear him, you would think there was no one in all the world more clever or strong than he.

One day Young Frost said to himself:

“My father has grown old and does his work badly. Now, I am young and strong and can freeze people much better. No one can hide from or get the better of me. I can lick anyone!”

And Young Frost set off in search of someone to freeze. He flew out on to a road, and he saw a lord riding in a buggy drawn by a sleek, well-fed horse. The lord himself was big and fat, he had on a fur coat and his legs were covered with a rug.

Young Frost looked the lord over and laughed.

“Ha!” said he. “You can wrap yourself in furs all you will, but it isn’t going to save you. The old man, my father, may not have been able to cope with you, but I can, I’ll chill you to the marrow. So hold tight! Neither your fur coat nor the rug will help.”

And Young Frost flew up to the lord and began plaguing and worrying him: he got under the rug, crept into his sleeves, stole under his collar and nipped his nose.

The lord ordered his coachman to whip the horse and make it go faster.

"I'll freeze to death if you don't," he said.

But Young Frost went on plaguing him more and more. He nipped his nose till it hurt, chilled his hands and feet and took his breath away.

The lord moved this way and that, he fidgeted on his seat and could not keep from shivering.

"Drive faster!" called he to the coachman.

But after a while he stopped shouting, for he had lost his voice.

And he was half-dead by the time he was driven up to his house and had to be carried out of the buggy.

Young Frost now flew up to Old Frost, his father, and began boasting of his strength and prowess.

"Look at me, Father!" he cried. "Look at me! I am very strong! You'll never be able to keep up with me! Just see what a big, fat lord I froze! And what a warm coat I crept under! You could never do it! You could never freeze anyone so big and strong!"

Old Frost smiled.

"You little braggart!" said he. "Do not be in such a hurry to boast of your strength. It's true you froze the lord and crept under his coat. But that's nothing. Look over there. See that peasant in his threadbare coat driving along in that broken old sledge of his?"

"Yes, I see him."

"Well, he is on his way to the forest for firewood. Just you try and freeze him. If you succeed, then I will believe you when you say that you are strong!"

"Humph! Here is a wonder indeed!" Young Frost cried. "Why, I'll freeze him in a moment!"

And Young Frost rose up into the air and flew after the peasant. He caught him up and fell on him and began plaguing and teasing him. He flew at him now from one side and now from the other, but the peasant rode on and never stopped. Then Young Frost began nipping his feet, but the peasant jumped off his sledge and ran beside the horse.

"Just you wait, peasant!" thought Young Frost. "I'll freeze you in the forest!"

The peasant came to the forest, he took out his axe and he began chopping down the spruces and birches, and he went at it so hard that the chips flew to all sides!

And Young Frost would give him no peace. He caught him by the hands and feet and crept under his collar.

But the harder Young Frost tried to freeze him, the faster the peasant swung his axe and the more trees he chopped down. In the end, so warm did he get that he even took off his gloves.

Young Frost went on plaguing the peasant till he was quite worn out.

"Never you mind," said he to himself, "I'll get the better of you yet. I'll chill you to the bone when you are on your way home."

He ran to the sledge, and, seeing the peasant's gloves, crept into one of them and blew into the other. He sat there in the glove and laughed, saying to himself:

"I'd just like to see how the peasant is going to put on his gloves. I have made them as hard as rock."

But the peasant went on chopping the wood and seemed to have no thought for anything else. He chopped till he had enough to fill the sledge.

"I suppose I might just as well go home now," said he.

He picked up his gloves, but so hard and stiff were they that he could not get them on.

"Well, what are you going to do now, my good man?" Young Frost said with a laugh.

But the peasant, seeing that he could not put on his gloves, took his axe and began striking them with it again and again.

The peasant went thump-thump! at the gloves with his axe, and Young Frost went oh-oh! inside one of them.

And such a trouncing did the peasant give Young Frost that Young Frost took to his heels and was more dead than alive.

The peasant drove home, urging on his horse with loud cries, and Young Frost tottered off, groaning, to his father.

Old Frost looked at Young Frost and burst out laughing.

"What's wrong, son?" asked he. "You look all worn out."

"I am, what with trying to freeze the peasant."

"And why are you groaning so?"

"Who wouldn't, in my place! My sides ache from the hiding he gave me."

"Now let this be a lesson to you, my son. It's easy enough to worst the lords, loafers that they are, but no one can get the better of a peasant. And don't you forget it!"

HOW A LORD TURNED INTO A HORSE

A Latvian Fairy Tale



In olden times there lived a cruel lord. He never spared his workmen and forced them to work until they were half dead. He gave them no rest even on holidays.

One morning, on a big holiday, when most people were resting from their labours, the lord sent his workmen to the barn to thresh grain.

Now, the workmen had been threshing all the past day and all night and were so tired that they could hardly stand.

They had just set to work when the lord himself rushed into the barn armed with a stick. It seemed to him that his workmen were too slow, and he fell on them with threats, flourishing his stick angrily.

"You loafers!" he shouted. "You won't leave the barn till you've threshed all the rye!"

The men made no reply to this, but they asked the lord to let them hitch a horse to the thresher that the work might be done more quickly.

"Oh, so now it's a horse you want, do you!" the lord cried. "Why, I'll strangle every one of you loafers with my own hands if you so much as dare suggest such a thing again! You'll get no horse from me! The horse must rest. You can very well do the work yourselves!"

And having shouted himself hoarse, the lord hurried from the threshing barn, for there is little pleasure in swallowing dust.

He had no sooner left than the workmen heard someone call out:

"Whoa, there! Whoa!..."

Then a horse neighed, and a bridle jangled. It was clear that a horse was being harnessed.

Who could be doing it?

Suddenly an old man entered the threshing barn. He was very, very old, with a long grey beard and eyes that flashed like lightning. Behind him, led firmly by the reins, came a sturdy bay stallion.

The old man greeted the workmen.

"Here is a horse for you," said he. "Hitch him to the thresher and use him for the hardest work. When you go to the forest, don't load timber in a cart, but after felling a tree, tie the horse to its crown and let him drag the tree, boughs and all, to the lord's house. If he balks and refuses to do it, lash his flanks and back mercilessly, lash all of him save his head and don't spare the whip! And don't give him anything to eat. When you've led him into his stall in the evening, hoist him on straps up to the ceiling. Let him hang there for a night after a day's work. It will only do him good."

And with these words the old man vanished.

The horse neighed loudly, and so closely did the tones of his voice resemble those of the lord that the workmen knew that he was not a horse at all but the lord in a horse's shape.

"It must have been old Father Perkon himself, lord of thunder and lightning, that brought him here!" said they. "And Perkon's command must be obeyed. What he has told us to do with the horse, that we will do."

They hitched the stallion to the thresher and at once set to work. Now, the stallion was stubborn, and he jibbed and neighed and stamped his hoofs and twisted his neck and made it plain that he did not want to work. But they paid no heed to this and gave him a lashing instead.

And so it went from that day on. Whenever the hardest work had to be done, they were sure to use the bay stallion for it. And if he balked, they flogged him mercilessly.

The stallion would toil all day without resting, and when night came he would be taken to his stall and hoisted on straps up to the ceiling to hang there till morning.

Nor was he given any food. In all the time he worked he only succeeded in stealing a wisp of straw now and then in winter and nibbling at some nettles that grew near the fence in summer, and that was all.

Now, on the very day that the stallion had made his appearance, the

cruel lord had disappeared. His lady searched and searched for him, but she could not find him.

A whole year went by. In the beginning the stallion had been strong and stately and sleek, but by the end of the year he wasted away: his mouth hung loose, his ribs poked through his flanks, his back had caved in and his mane was limp and straggly.

One day the lady saw the stallion in the yard, and she said to the steward:

"That wretched old horse there had better be taken to the forest and shot. It makes me sick to look at him!"

But the steward, too, must have guessed that the horse was really the lord in his shape and did not kill him.

One morning, on a big holiday, when everyone was resting, the stallion quietly left his stall. He got into the lord's kitchen garden and began eating the cabbages.

The lady went out for a walk, she strolled into the kitchen garden, and what did she see but the stallion greedily peeling off cabbage leaves and swallowing them.

The lady flew into a passion.

"You good-for-nothing brute, you!" cried she. "Just wait, I'll teach you a lesson!"

And picking up a thick stick, she caught the horse a blow over the head! And lo and behold!—there before her stood her lord himself.

Said the lord in a weak voice:

"My dear wife, why do you beat me? Do you grudge me a few cabbage leaves? After a year of starvation they seem sweeter to me than the choicest dishes I ever tasted!"

Now the lady recognised him, and she gasped in horror. The lord did not look like himself at all: he was very thin and dark of face, his beard and his fingernails had grown very long, his whole body was a mass of cuts and bruises, and of his clothes nothing was left but tatters.

The lady seized him by the hand and led him quietly into the house so that no one might see him.

And from that time on the lord was always meek and humble.

TO EACH HIS DESERTS

An Estonian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time a poor old man was walking along a road. Dusk had descended, and night was approaching.

The old man decided to ask for shelter, and he knocked at the window of a large house.

"Let me in for the night, good folk!" said he.

Hearing him, the mistress of the house, a rich and haughty woman, came out and began to scold the stranger and shout at him.

"I will let the dogs loose on you!" she cried. "Then you'll know how to ask people to put you up for the night. Get away from here!"

The old man walked on. He saw a poor little house, and he knocked at the window.

"Won't you give me shelter for the night, good folk?" he asked.

"Come in, come in!" the mistress of the house called to him in friendly tones. "You are welcome to spend the night with us. Only it's noisy and there isn't much room. I hope you don't mind."

The stranger came into the house, and he saw that the family were very poor. There were many children, and the shirts they had on were tattered and worn.

"Why do you let your children go about in such rags?" the stranger asked. "Why don't you make them new shirts?"

"How can I!" the woman replied. "My husband is dead, and I have to

bring up the children all by myself.... We haven't enough money for bread even, let alone clothing."

The stranger heard her out and said not a word in reply. And the mistress of the house put the food on the table and invited him to join them.

"Come and eat with us," said she.

"No, thank you," the old man replied. "I am not hungry. I ate but a short time ago."

And untying his bag, he took out all the food there was in it and gave it to the children. After that he lay down on the floor in a corner of the room and at once fell asleep.

In the morning the old man rose, thanked the mistress of the house for her hospitality and said in parting:

"That which you do in the morning, you will do till evening."

The woman did not understand the stranger's words and paid them no heed. She saw him to the gate and came back into the house.

"If even this poor man says that my children look like ragamuffins, what will other people say!" she thought to herself.

And as there was not enough cloth for more, she decided to make one shirt out of the last piece of cloth she had in the house. So she went to her rich neighbour's house to borrow a yardstick to measure the cloth and see if there was enough for even that one shirt. The rich neighbour gave it her and she hurried to her storeroom with it. She took the piece of cloth from the shelf and began to measure it. As she did so, the piece kept growing larger and larger, and there seemed no end to it. She spent the whole day measuring it and only finished late in the evening.

She was sure now that she had enough cloth to last her and her children all their lives.

"So that was what the stranger meant!" she said to herself.

That same evening she took the yardstick back to her rich neighbour, and without holding anything back, told her how at the word of the old man, a stranger, she had acquired a storeroom of cloth.

"Dear me, why didn't I let him in for the night!" the rich woman said to herself, and she called to her workman:

"Come, my man, harness a horse quickly and ride fast after that beggar. Bring him back here at any cost! The poor should be helped without stint. I always said so."

The workman at once drove off in search of the old man, and he caught him up on the following day. But the old man refused to go back.

The workman was sorely grieved.

"Unhappy man that I am!" said he. "If I don't bring you back, my mistress will drive me out of the house and leave me without wages."

"Don't fret, my lad," the old man said. "So be it! I'll go with you."

And climbing into the cart, he drove off with the workman.

The rich woman stood at her gate, all impatience. She met the old man with bows and smiles, and, leading him into the house, gave him food and drink and made up a soft bed for him, saying:

"Lie down, father, and rest!"

The old man lived in the rich woman's house for a day and for another and for a third. He ate and drank and slept and smoked his pipe. The mistress of the house gave him food and drink and she spoke kindly to him, but inwardly she was fuming.

"When will the old good-for-nothing get out of here!" said she to herself.

But she dared not turn the old man out, for then all the trouble she had gone to on his account would be wasted.

To her great joy, early in the morning on the fourth day, the old man began getting ready to leave. The rich woman went to see him off. As he walked silently to the gate and out of it, she could restrain herself no longer.

"What am I to do today, tell me?" she asked.

The old man looked at her.

"That which you do in the morning, you will do till evening," said he.

The rich woman rushed into the house and she snatched up her yardstick in order to measure her cloth.

But she sneezed suddenly, and so loudly that the chickens in the yard were frightened and fluttered off in all directions.

And she kept on sneezing all day, without a stop:

"A-tishoo! A-tishoo! A-tishoo!"

She could neither eat, nor drink, nor answer any questions. All that came from her was:

"A-tishoo! A-tishoo! A-tishoo!"

And only when the sun had set and darkness fell did she stop sneezing.

HIYSI'S MILLSTONE

A Karelian Fairy Tale



Once there lived two brothers, one of whom was poor and the other rich. With his neighbours the rich brother was friendly and ready to please, but with his own brother he acted as if he did not know him, for he feared that the other might ask him to share his riches with him.

Not that the poor brother ever asked for anything. He never did, if he could help it.

But once on the eve of a holiday his wife said to him:

"How are we going to mark this day? We have nothing at all to eat in the house. Go to your brother and borrow a little meat from him. He slaughtered a cow yesterday, I saw him."

The poor man did not like to go to his brother and he told his wife so, but there was no one else he could go to.

So he came to his brother and said:

"Lend me a little meat, brother, we have nothing in the house for the holiday."

And the rich brother threw him a cow's hoof, saying:

"Here, take it and go to Hiysi!"

The poor brother left the rich brother's house, and he said to himself:

"He has given the hoof not to me, but to Hiysi the Wood Goblin, so it is to Hiysi I had better take it."

And he started off for the forest.

Whether he was long on the way or not nobody knows, but by and by he met some woodcutters.

"Where are you going?" asked the woodcutters.

"To see Hiysi the Wood Goblin and give him this cow's hoof," the

poor man replied. "Can you tell me where I can find his hut?"

Said the woodcutters:

"Go straight ahead and never turn from the road, and you'll come to it. But first listen to us. If Hiysi tries to give you silver in return for the cow's hoof, don't take it. If he tries to give you gold, don't take it either. Ask for his millstone and for nothing else."

The poor man thanked the woodcutters for their kind counsel, said goodbye to them and went on.

Whether he was long on the way or not nobody knows, but by and by he saw a hut. He came inside, and whom should he see there but Hiysi himself!

Hiysi looked at him and said:

"People often promise to bring me gifts, but they rarely do. What have you brought me?"

"A cow's hoof."

Hiysi was overjoyed.

"For thirty years I have eaten no meat," said he. "Give me the hoof quickly!"

And he took the hoof and ate it.

"Now I should like to give you something in return for the hoof," he said. "Here, take these two handfuls of silver."

"I don't want any silver," said the poor man.

Then Hiysi took out some gold, and he offered the poor man two handfuls of it.

"I don't want any gold, either," said the poor man.

"What do you want, then?"

"Your millstone."

"Oh no, you can't have that! But I can give you as much money as you like."

But to this the poor man would not agree and kept asking for the millstone.

"I have eaten the cow's hoof," Hiysi said, "and I suppose there's nothing I can do. So be it, take my millstone. But do you know what to do with it?"

"No, I don't. Tell me."

"Well," said Hiysi, "this is no simple millstone. It will give you whatever you ask of it if only you say: 'Grind, my millstone!' And if you want it to stop, just say: 'Enough, my millstone!' and it will stop. And now be off with you!"

The poor man thanked Hiysi and set off homewards.

He walked in the forest for a long time, and it soon grew dark there,

the rain fell in torrents, the wind whistled, and the branches of the trees struck him in the face. It was morning by the time the poor man came home.

"Where were you wandering all day and all night?" his wife asked. "I was beginning to think that I would never see you again."

"I was at the house of Hiysi the Wood Goblin himself," the poor man replied. "Just see what he has given me!"

And he took the millstone out of his bag.

"Grind, my millstone!" said he. "Give us nice things to eat!"

And the millstone began to turn round and round of itself, and on to the table there poured flour and grain and sugar and meat and fish and everything else one could wish for. The poor man's wife brought sacks and bowls, and she filled them full of food. The poor man then tapped the millstone with his finger and said: "Enough, my millstone!" and the millstone at once stopped grinding and came to a standstill.

The poor man's family had as good a holiday as anyone in the village, and from that day their life changed for the better. There was enough and to spare in the house, the wife and children had fine new clothes and shoes and they wanted for nothing.

One day the poor man ordered his millstone to grind him some oats for his horse. The millstone did so, and the horse stood by the house and munched the oats.

Just then the rich brother sent his workman to the lake to water his horses.

The workman did as he was told, but as they were passing the poor brother's house, the horses saw the oats, stopped and began eating them.

The rich brother came out on to the porch.

"Lead the horses away at once!" he called to the workman. "They are picking up sweepings."

The workman brought back the horses.

"You were wrong, master," said he. "Those were not sweepings, but the choicest oats. Your brother has oats and everything else in plenty."

The rich brother's curiosity was aroused.

"I think I shall go and see how my brother could have suddenly become rich," said he.

And he went to see his brother.

"How have you become rich all of a sudden?" he asked. "Where do all these good things come from?"

The poor brother did not keep anything back.

"Hiysi helped me," said he.

"What do you mean?" the rich brother asked.

"Just what I say. You gave me a cow's hoof on the eve of the holiday and told me to go to Hiysi with it. And that was just what I did. I gave Hiysi the hoof, and, in return, he made me a present of a magic millstone. It is this millstone that gives me everything I ask for."

"Show it to me!"

"As you wish."

And the poor brother ordered the millstone to give them delicacies of all sorts to eat. The millstone at once began turning round and round, and the table groaned with the weight of fresh-baked pies and roasted meats and other good things to eat.

The rich brother's eyes fairly popped out of his head.

"Sell me the millstone," he begged.

"I can't do that!" said the poor brother, "I need it myself."

But the rich brother was not so easily put off.

"Name your price, only sell it to me!" he urged.

"It's not for sale."

Seeing that he would gain nothing by badgering, the rich brother tried a different approach.

"Was there ever anyone as ungrateful as you!" he cried. "Wasn't it I that gave you the cow's hoof?"

"It was."

"There you are, then! And you grudge me your millstone. Well, if you won't sell it, then lend it me for a while."

The poor brother thought this over.

"Very well," said he. "You can have it for a spell."

The rich brother was delighted. He seized the millstone and ran home with it, without so much as asking how to make it stop turning after he was done with it.

The following morning he put out to sea in a boat, taking the millstone with him.

"They are salting fish just now," thought he to himself, "and salt is dear. I'm going to trade in salt."

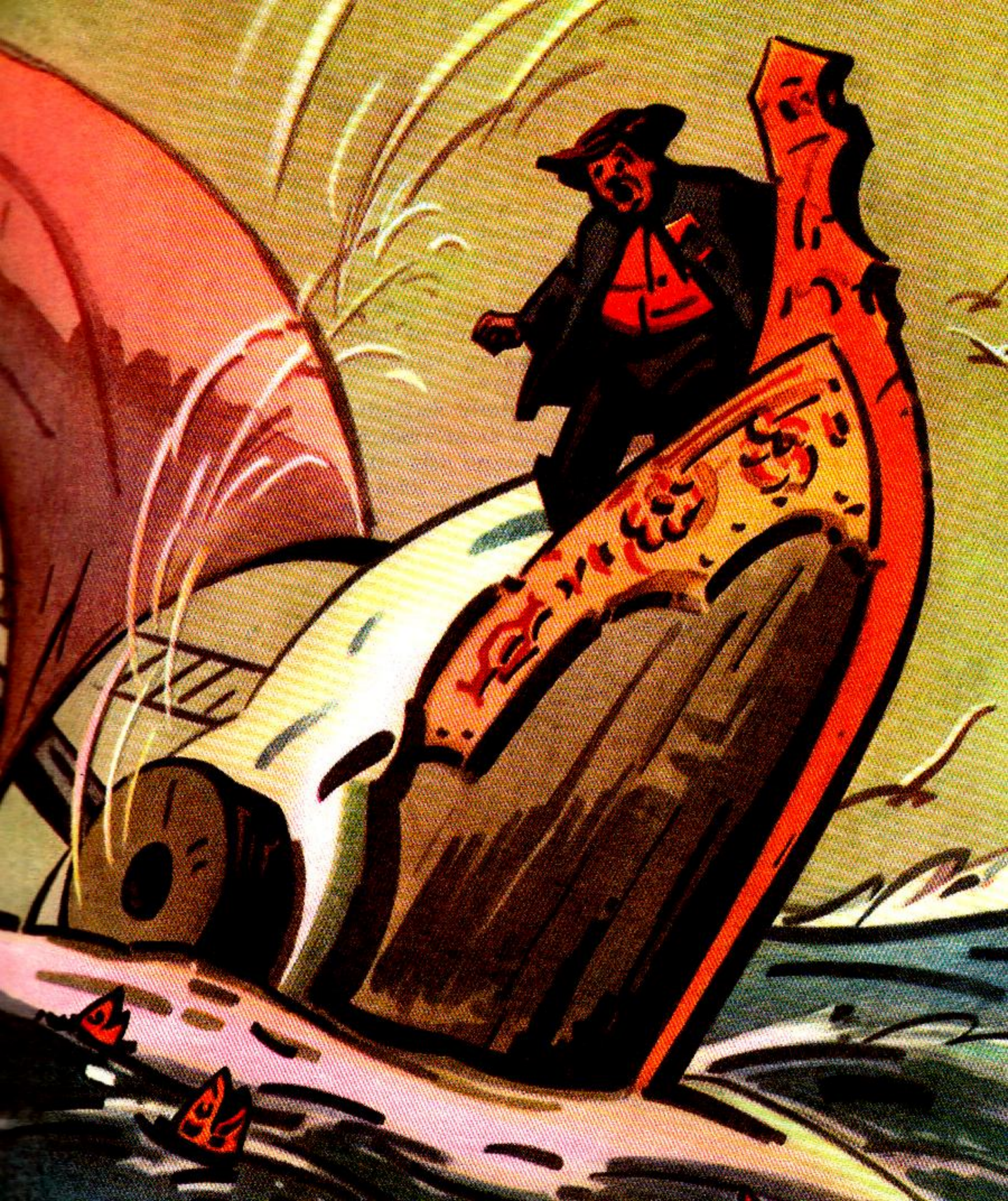
He was well out at sea by now, and he said to the millstone:

"Grind, my millstone! I need salt, the more the better."

The millstone started turning, it turned and it turned, and the purest, whitest salt poured from it.

The rich man looked on in glee and counted his profits. It was high time to tell the millstone to stop, but all he did was to say from time to time:

"Grind, my millstone, grind, don't stop!"



So heavy was the salt that the boat settled deeper and deeper in the water. But the rich brother seemed to have taken leave of his senses, for he did nothing but repeat the words:

“Grind, my millstone, grind!”

By now the water was gushing in over the sides, and the boat was near to sinking. This brought the rich brother to his senses.

“Stop grinding, millstone!” he shouted.

But the millstone went on grinding as before.

“Stop grinding, millstone! Stop grinding!” the rich man shouted again, but the millstone went on grinding and did not stop.

The rich brother tried to snatch up the millstone and throw it overboard, but it seemed to have grown fast to the floor of the boat, for he could not lift it.

“Help! Help!” cried the rich brother. “Save me, somebody!”

But there was no one there to save or to help him.

The boat sank, taking the rich brother with it into the watery depths, and the sea closed over him.

And what of the millstone? They say that even at the bottom of the sea it never stopped grinding but kept making more and more salt. And that, believe it or not, is why sea water is salty.

THE THREE BROTHERS AND THE POT OF GOLD

A Moldavian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived a man who had three sons. He was a hardworking man and laboured from morn till night. But his sons did not take after their father. They were strong and healthy lads, all three, but terrible loafers who did not want to do anything at all.

The father worked in the field, in the garden and in the house, but his sons sat chatting in the shade under the trees or went to the Dniester for a day's fishing.

"Why do you never help your father?" their neighbours asked.

"Why should we?" the sons replied. "Father takes good care of us and does all the work very well by himself."

And so it went from year to year.

The sons grew to manhood, and the father aged and could no longer work as before. The garden round the house ran wild and the field was overgrown with weeds. The sons saw this, but were so lazy that they would do nothing about it.

"Why do you sit there, my sons, idling the hours away?" their father would ask them. "I worked hard all my life, and now your time has come to do the same."

But no matter what he said, his sons would not listen to him and did nothing but twiddle their thumbs.

So troubled was the old man that his sons were such loafers that he fell ill and took to his bed.

By now the family were in the direst need. Nettles and thistles grew so thick around the house that it was barely visible.

One day the old man called his sons to his bedside.

"My end has come, my sons," said he. "How are you going to live without me, loafers that you are?"

The sons burst into tears.

"Give us your last counsel, Father," the eldest son begged. "Tell us what we are to do."

"Very well!" the father replied. "I'll tell you a secret. You know that your mother and I toiled hard and ceaselessly. Over the years, bit by bit, we were able to put aside what we earned till we had a whole potful of gold. I buried the pot near the house, only I don't remember just where. Find it, and you will be rich and never know need."

With that he bade his sons goodbye and breathed his last.

The sons were deeply grieved and they wept and sorrowed for a long time. One day the eldest of them said:

"Well, brothers, we are poor indeed, we haven't even money enough to buy bread with. Let us do as our father bade before he died and look for the pot of gold."

They took their spades and began digging near the house. They dug and they dug, but they could not find the pot of gold.

Said the middle brother:

"If we dig like this, my brothers, we will never find the pot. Let us dig up the ground all around the house!"

The brothers agreed. They took up their spades again and they dug up the ground all around the house, but no pot of gold did they find.

"Let us dig some more, but deeper," said the youngest brother. "Perhaps father buried the pot of gold deep down."

Once again the brothers agreed: they were very eager to find the pot.

They set to work, and the eldest brother, who had been digging a long time, suddenly felt his spade strike something quite big and hard. His heart pounding wildly, for he thought that he had found the pot of gold, he called to his brothers to come to him quickly.

The two brothers came running and began helping their elder brother dig.

They worked very, very hard, but what they dug up from the ground was not a pot of gold, but a large stone.

The brothers were disappointed.

"What shall we do with the stone?" said they. "It's no use leaving it here. Let us carry it away and throw it in a gully."

No sooner said than done. They got rid of the stone and began digging again. They worked all day long, never stopping to eat or rest, and they dug up the whole of the garden. The soil under their spades became nice and soft, but for all their efforts no pot of gold did they find.

"Now that we have dug up the garden, it's no use leaving things at that! Let us plant grapevines here!" said the eldest brother.

"That's a good idea!" the two younger brothers agreed. "At least our labours will not have been wasted."

So they planted some grapevines and began tending them carefully.

A short time passed, and they had a fine, large vineyard where ripened fine, juicy grapes.

The brothers gathered a rich harvest. They put aside the grapes they needed for themselves and sold the rest at a profit.

Said the eldest brother:

"It was not in vain, after all, that we dug up our garden, for we found the treasure of which father spoke before he died."

BASIL FET-FRUMOS AND ILANA COSINZANA, SISTER OF THE SUN

A Moldavian Fairy Tale



*A fact is a fact and a tale is
a tale,
But where no one passed
there runs no trail;
What was not planted
bears no seeds;
What did not happen
no rumours breeds.*

Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife, and they had a daughter as beautiful as the morning is bright. She was quick too and skilful with her hands, and as playful and spirited as the spring breeze. Anyone chancing to see her nimble fingers, her sparkling eyes, her flushed and rosy cheeks, could not forget her for the rest of his life, and the sight of her made the lads' hearts beat faster.

One fine day this lovely lass took two jugs and went to the well to fetch water. The jugs filled, she decided to sit by the well a while. She sat there and she gazed down the well and saw some basil growing there. Without another thought she plucked the basil and sniffed it and at once found herself with child.

When they learned of this, the girl's parents fell to scolding her. Now life no longer seemed sweet to her, and the girl resolved to run away.

She got ready some things without anyone knowing anything about it and stole quietly out of the house.

What with her fear and sense of injury, the girl went on and on

without stopping until she reached a dense forest. She found a cave there and decided to crawl inside and have a little sleep. But she had not had time to lie down when there, coming toward her, she saw an old man with a hump and a beard that reached to his knees.

"Who are you and how did you get here?" the old man asked, using his crutch to push up the bushy eyebrows that quite concealed his eyes.

At this, the girl began sobbing and weeping and finally told him all about everything.

The old man listened to her in silence. He seated the girl on a stone bench and spoke to her kindly.

Now, it often happens that just as the rain cools the sun-baked earth, so the speeches of old people act as a balm that soothes the spirits of the young. The old man's warm sympathy comforted the girl, and she stayed with him in his cave.

And so the two of them shared a home, the girl finding solace in the old man's company, and the old man, contentment in hers.

Every morning three goats would come to the cave, the old man would milk them, and he and the girl would drink the milk.

The time passed swiftly, and the girl gave birth to a little boy, and so pretty was he that the sun smiled when it gazed on him. The old man was very happy. His feet seemed to dance of themselves, and his heart grew as light as ever it had been in his youth.

The moment the child was born they bathed him in morning dew so as to make him strong and healthy and waved a flaming torch and a sword of steel over him that no harm might ever come to him. Then the mother spoke magic words over him to make him brave and fearless, and the old man rummaged in the darkest corners of the cave, found a club and a sword there left from the days of his youth and gave them to him.

Little was eaten or drunk at the christening, but there was much joy and laughter. They wished the boy health and happiness and the old man called him Basil, after the plant his mother had plucked in the well. To this the mother added a second name—Fet-Frumos, or Handsome Youth, for her son seemed very handsome to her.

The years flew, the old man died, and the boy grew up. He would now go out to hunt and he would bring back to his mother as much food as she wanted. The older he grew the happier his mother's life became, for he was a great joy and comfort to her.

When Basil Fet-Frumos reached manhood he began to hunt in distant groves and forests, and he wandered farther and farther away from home.

One day Basil came to the mouth of a valley, and when he looked into the distance he seemed to see a large green lake there, with the sun bathing in it. But when he came nearer he saw that the lake was not a lake at all but a palace of gold that shone and sparkled in the midst of the forest.

Never in his life had he seen a palace so beautiful, and touching his club and sword to make sure they were there, he made straight for it. The windows and doors of the palace stood ajar, but not a living soul was there to be seen within or without. Basil Fet-Frumos went from chamber to chamber and so through the whole palace. He came out into the courtyard and looked round him again, but saw no one. Then there suddenly came a great humming and droning and a crackling of twigs, and lo and behold!—crawling toward him from the forest were seven fearful-looking dragons, each

with the head
of a goat,
the hoofs
of an ass,
the jaws
of a wolf
and eyes
that spurted flame.

They moved quickly, and they carried three men, bound hand and foot, over their shoulders. The dragons burst into the palace, made up a fire under a great cauldron, and when the water began to boil, threw one of their three captives into the pot. They cooked and ate him up quickly, bones and all, their jaws working as they ate, and then did the same with the other two men.

Basil Fet-Frumos watched them from behind the door where he had hidden himself and could hardly believe his eyes. The dragons ate up everything to the last morsel, and then one of them turned, caught sight of Basil and leapt up as if stung.

"Into the yard, friends!" cried he. "There's another man there waiting to be thrown into the cauldron!"

At this, the dragons all jumped up and rushed to the door. But Basil unsheathed his sword, and as each of them stepped over the threshold, the sword came down over his head and it rolled over the floor like a cabbage head.

In this way Basil Fet-Frumos killed six of the dragons, but he could do nothing with the seventh, for his sword proved powerless against

him. He struck him on the neck and on the head and he tried piercing him through the heart, but all to no avail. Then, without another thought, Basil Fet-Frumos caught up his club, swung it over his head and struck the dragon such a blow that the world went black before his eyes. The dragon spun round and round and began backing away, bumping his head against the walls at every step. From room to room he went, and, reaching the last one; opened a trapdoor in the floor and stumbled down a staircase covered with moss and cobwebs. And Basil gave him no quarter and went after him. They passed through twelve iron doors and reached the very last step, and then the dragon squeezed himself against the wall and shook with fright.

But Basil did not touch him. He went out through the door, bolted and barred it behind him and began climbing the stairs again. He barred all twelve doors as he passed through them, locked the last of them and put the key into his pocket. After that, pleased that he had done right, he went home.

He came back to the cave in the highest of spirits and he said to his mother:

"I have found a large and beautiful palace, Mother. From now on we are going to live there."

The mother was overjoyed. She and Basil left the cave, and, going to the golden palace, made their home there.

Said Basil Fet-Frumos:

"All this is ours. But you are never to open the door of the last room, Mother, for one of the dragons is there."

"I never will, depend on it, my son," the mother replied. "The dragon tried to eat you up, so I shall always keep the door locked."

And taking the key, the mother wrapped it in a kerchief and put it away in a place only she knew about.

As though from a horn of plenty all life's boons and blessings now came showering down upon mother and son. The palace they lived in was beautiful and so were the gardens, and the game in the forests plentiful.

Thus did they live not for a year and not for two years, but for many years.

But just as spring will suddenly bring with it all the warmth of summer, so will storms descend on the earth, ready to shatter and destroy everything upon it.

The seven dragons had come from another tsardom and had been reared by Cloantsa, a wicked old witch who could reduce the earth to ashes at a glance if she chose. Now, Cloantsa had been waiting for the

dragons to pay her a visit, and when they failed to appear, she was filled with dark foreboding and rushed to the palace to see what was wrong.

When she learned of the sorry fate that had befallen her friends she clutched her head with her hands and stood there moaning and trembling. Then, beside herself with rage, she threw herself on Basil's mother, forced the key from her, pushed her into the dungeon where the dragon who was still alive was kept, and, freeing him, told him to follow her. And she locked and barred all the twelve doors behind her.

After that she and the dragon sat down and began to talk over how they were to revenge themselves on Basil.

"You must challenge him to battle," Cloantsa said.

"No, I'm afraid of him," the dragon replied. "His strength far surpasses mine. I think we had better go away while there is still time and not let him set eyes on us, for it will be the worse for us, otherwise."

"If that is how you feel, then you must put your trust in me," said Cloantsa. "I will goad and taunt him till he is in such a state that he will seek death as a deliverance."

And she hid the dragon, and, taking the shape of Basil Fet-Frumos's mother, sat down to wait for Basil Fet-Frumos.

A day passed and then another, and Basil Fet-Frumos came back from the forest. No sooner had he crossed the threshold than Cloantsa, who pretended to be gravely ill, began moaning and sighing.

"I was afraid that you were never coming back, my son," said she. "For here am I gravely ill and in pain, with no one to help me. Do fetch me some bird's milk! One drop will be enough to make me well again."

Basil Fet-Frumos listened to her with heavy heart. He took a jug, and, telling Cloantsa that she could trust him to be back soon, went off in search of bird's milk.

On and on he walked over hills and dales and at last came to a house surrounded by a high fence. He knocked at the gate, and a girl's voice called to him, saying:

"If you are a good man, come in. But if you are a bad man, pass by, or else my dogs will tear you to pieces."

"It is a good man who is knocking at your gate, maid," said Basil Fet-Frumos.

The gate swung open, and Basil Fet-Frumos saw a fine house, its doors and windows ajar, before him.

He greeted the girl and was greeted by her in return, and so beautiful was she that he could not take his eyes from her.

Said Basil Fet-Frumos:

"I have walked a long way and as long a way lies before me. Will you let me spend the night here?"

"Gladly," the girl replied, and she seated him on a rug and placed before him many good things to eat and to drink.

They sat there together, and Basil Fet-Frumos told the girl what it was that had brought him so far from his home.

"Do you know where bird's milk can be found?" he asked.

"I have never heard of bird's milk," the girl replied. "But you are a good youth, and I will try to find out what you wish to know. I will go to my brother the Bright Sun and ask him about it, for who but he is to know of such things!"

Ilana Cosinzana led Basil Fet-Frumos, who was very tired, to his bedchamber and herself went to her brother and asked him if he knew where bird's milk was to be found.

"Far away, beyond the Copper Mountain, little sister," the Bright Sun replied. "It will take many weeks to get there. And the bird that gives milk cannot be caught, for it is a monster the like of which is rarely seen. If anyone comes near it, it carries him off to its nest for its fledgelings to eat."

Ilana Cosinzana, sister of the Sun, was filled with fear at the thought of the terrible fate that awaited Basil Fet-Frumos. She had promised to help him, and he would be going forth to meet his death! The following morning she led a twelve-winged horse from her stable and gave him to Basil.

"Take this horse, good youth," said she. "He will serve you well and keep you safe. But whether fortune favours you or not, you must stop at my house again on the way back."

Basil Fet-Frumos, who dearly wanted to lay his heart at the feet of this kind and beautiful girl, thanked her warmly, mounted the horse and rode away.

*He rode and he rode
over hill and dale,
over field and vale,
over wood, over lea,
over steppeland free*

till he saw, looming before him in the distance, something that looked like a wall of copper. As he came nearer, it seemed to grow taller and taller and he saw that it was not a wall but the side of a huge mountain whose peak held up the sky. Basil Fet-Frumos let his eyes sweep over it, and high above it he saw a huge bird with wings as large and as dark as

thunder clouds. The bird wheeled round and round for a time and then vanished from sight.

Basil Fet-Frumos pulled on the reins and sent his horse up the mountain. The horse broke into a gallop, and it carried Basil Fet-Frumos up to the very top. Basil Fet-Frumos looked around him, and he saw great nests of copper in which sat the monster bird's fledgelings, each the size of an ox and shrieking its head off with hunger.

Basil Fet-Frumos had just had time to hide in a crevice when the mother bird came flying back. She flew from nest to nest and fed her fledgelings with her milk, and as she flew to the nest near which Basil Fet-Frumos was hiding, he held out his jug, and some of the milk poured into it. Then he jumped on his horse and rode away for dear life! But one of the fledgelings gave a shriek, and the mother bird glanced round and caught sight of Basil. She flew after him as fast as she could, but could not overtake him, for she had only one pair of wings while Basil's horse had six.

*Over hill and dale,
over field and vale,
over wood, over lea,
over steppeland free*

rode Basil Fet-Frumos till he reached the house of Ilana Cosinzana, and Ilana welcomed him kindly and invited him to stay with her and rest.

Basil Fet-Frumos ate and drank and then went to bed, but Ilana, who knew so much more about what was to be than she liked to say, hid the bird's milk and filled Basil Fet-Frumos's jug with ordinary cow's milk.

Basil Fet-Frumos woke and he picked up the jug.

"You have been kind to me indeed, my sister," said he to Ilana Cosinzana, "and I have had a good rest. But now I must be on my way, for my mother is waiting for me."

Said Ilana in reply:

"Well, if you must you must, brave youth, and a happy journey to you! But come back and pay me a visit again some time."

Basil Fet-Frumos bowed to Ilana, bade her goodbye and rode away.

He rode up to his palace, and Cloantsa, seeing him approach, twisted and writhed in despair. She threw herself on her bed and moaned and sighed.

But when Basil Fet-Frumos came into her chamber, she said to him:

"How glad I am you are back, my sweet son. I have waited for you for such a long time! Have you brought me the milk?"

"I have," Basil Fet-Frumos replied, and he held out the jug.

Cloantsa put her lips to the jug and drained it.

"Thank you, my sweet son, I feel better already," said she.

She lay down and pretended to be asleep, but she could not sleep a wink for wondering where to send Basil Fet-Frumos so that he might never come back again. She lay there thinking, and then she suddenly began twisting and turning and moaning again as if in pain.

"Oh, my dear, dear son!" she cried. "I am more sick than ever I was before. But I dreamt I would recover if I ate of the flesh of a young wild boar."

"I will go and bring you some, for my one wish is that you should be well," said Basil Fet-Frumos.

And jumping on his horse, he rode away. He rode a long time till he came again to the house of Ilana Cosinzana.

"Am I welcome in your house, Ilana?" he asked her.

"You are indeed," Ilana replied.

Basil Fet-Frumos seated himself and began telling Ilana where he was going and why.

"Do you know where I can find a wild boar?" he asked her. "My mother is ill again, and she says that she will only get well if she eats of the flesh of a young wild boar."

"Stay here a while and rest, and in the evening I will go to see my brother the Bright Sun and ask him about it," Ilana said. "He is sure to know, for from his seat in the sky he can see all there is to see."

Basil Fet-Frumos lay down for a sleep, and Ilana went to see her brother the Bright Sun.

"Do you know where wild boars are to be found?" she asked him.

"Far away to the north, my sister, beyond wide fields and flowering leas, in a great, shady forest of cedar trees," the Bright Sun replied.

"How can a young boar be captured?" Ilana asked.

"I do not know how, my sister. So thick grow the cedars in the forest that even my rays cannot pierce the darkness, and I have only seen the boars at noon when they come to the forest edge to wallow in the swamp there. Their teeth are sharp, and to venture near is to be torn to shreds."

Ilana Cosinzana told Basil Fet-Frumos what her brother had said, and Basil Fet-Frumos, who now knew where to go as well as the danger that awaited him, mounted his horse and set off on his way. He rode over hills and he rode over dales, he rode over rivers and gullies, he crossed wide fields and flowering leas, and he came to a great, shady forest of cedar trees. He rode into the forest, and it was as dark there as in the

nether world. His twelve-winged horse soared up to the sky, and Basil saw the swamp on the edge of the forest of which Ilana had told him. It was almost noon, and the boars came running out into the open, grunting loudly as they ran.

Seeing a fine young boar, Basil Fet-Frumos came down on him quickly, seized him, hoisted him on to his horse's back and rode away! But the other boars had already seen him and at once went after him. And had his horse not flown as fast as the wind they would have pierced Basil Fet-Frumos with their tusks. The horse now began prancing about in his joy, and Basil Fet-Frumos hummed a tune and was as happy as can be.

On his way back he stopped at Ilana Cosinzana's house as before. He ate and drank and then lay down for a rest, and Ilana Cosinzana took away the boar and put an ordinary suckling pig in its place and she saw Basil Fet-Frumos off on his way without so much as a sign of what she had done.

When Cloantsa saw Basil Fet-Frumos she gnashed her teeth so hard that the sparks rained from her mouth. But she pretended to be very ill and said to him as he came into her chamber:

"Ah, my son, my dear son, Heaven be praised that you are here and I see you again! Had you tarried, you would not have found me alive. Kill the boar quickly and let me eat of its flesh."

Basil Fet-Frumos slaughtered and roasted the pig and gave Cloantsa a bit of the meat.

"I feel much better," the witch said.

But when she had eaten all of the meat, she fell to moaning and sighing more loudly than ever.

"Oh, my son, my dear son!" she cried. "You have travelled to distant parts and been in great danger, but if you want me to be well, you must set out from home once more. For I feel worse again, and unless you bring me some dead and living water, I shall die."

"Then I shall certainly go, Mother," Basil Fet-Frumos replied, and he set out on his journey.

He rode hard and long and he felt sick at heart and was filled with bitterness, for where could he get what his mother had asked for! He reached Ilana Cosinzana's house and complained of his lot in bitter tones.

"My sweet sister," said he to Ilana, "I am driven to go where I know not. Nothing seems to help my mother, and she has now bade me bring her dead and living water. Do you know where it is to be found and how I am to get it?"

"Bide here a while and rest, Basil Fet-Frumos," Ilana said. "And perhaps I can help you this time too."

She waited till dusk and then went to see her brother the Bright Sun, who had just returned from his long wanderings.

"O Bright Sun, my brother," said she, "from your seat high in the sky all of the earth lies open to your gaze. Do you know where dead and living water is to be found?"

"Far away, my sister," the Bright Sun replied, "beyond thrice-nine lands and thrice-nine seas, in the land of the Mistress of the Fields. But of the many who have gone to fetch it no one has returned alive. The land is guarded by a fierce dragon who kills all who come there. For a long time now have I been drying their bones."

Basil Fet-Frumos now knew where he was to go and what lay ahead, but he felt no fear, and, touching his sword and the club that was tucked into his belt, took leave of Ilana Cosinzana, jumped on his horse and rode away. The way was long and he rode without stopping, crossing fields and forests and skirting rivers and seas. Beyond thrice-nine seas and thrice-nine lands he travelled and he came to the richest and most splendid land he had ever seen, where even the beauties of nature far surpassed those of any other. Here there were no dry twigs or shrivelled blades of grass. All the plants blossomed luxuriantly and bore rich fruit.

Basil Fet-Frumos roamed the land, and his heart rejoiced. By and by he reached two rocks out of which gushed two springs.

"This must be the dead and living water," thought Basil Fet-Frumos, and, to make sure, he caught a butterfly, tore it to bits and dipped the bits in the water of one of the springs. The bits at once fitted together, and the butterfly became whole again, and when he had dipped it in the water of the second spring, it came to life.

Basil Fet-Frumos was overjoyed. He filled his two leather flasks with water from the springs and set off homewards. But he had hardly reached the border when the trees around him began creaking and swaying as if during a storm, the sky became overcast, and there before him, striking the ground wrathfully with his tail, rose a ten-headed dragon.

Basil Fet-Frumos seized his club in one hand and his sword in the other, and when the dragon craned one of his necks toward him, struck the head with his club and smote it off with his sword. He did the same with the second head and with the third, and feeling his end was near, the dragon soared up to the sky. But Basil Fet-Frumos's horse flew higher still, and Basil Fet-Frumos chopped off all

of the dragon's ten heads and sent him crashing to the ground.

He then rode on unhindered until he came to the house of Ilana Cosinzana. He lay down for a rest, and Ilana Cosinzana replaced the flasks he had brought by two of her own, filled with ordinary water. And, of course, it never for a moment entered Basil Fet-Frumos's head that Ilana Cosinzana, who had helped him so many times, could have done anything of the kind. He had a good sleep, saddled his horse and set off for home.

When Cloantsa saw Basil Fet-Frumos she turned dark with rage. She sipped a little of the water he had brought and fell to thinking how she was to do away with him.

She let him rest after his travels and then called him to her, kissed him tenderly and said:

"My dear son, my own Basil, long have you journeyed and many have been the roads you followed. You must be quite without strength. Come, let us see if you can tear this rope!"

And taking out a silken rope, she bound him with it.

Basil Fet-Frumos braced himself, he strained at the rope, and it broke in several places.

"And now let us see if you can break two ropes," the witch said, and she bound him with two ropes.

But Basil broke the two ropes just as he had the first.

"You are very strong still, but let us see if you can break three ropes," said the witch, and she bound him with three ropes.

Basil Fet-Frumos tensed his muscles and strained at the ropes, but break them he could not. He tried again and he strained and struggled, but the ropes only bit into his flesh. He tried for the third time, but the ropes cut his flesh to the bone and refused to be broken.

Cloantsa was overjoyed, and she hopped about on one leg and spun like a top.

"Come, dragon, where are you?" she cried. "Make haste and do away with Basil Fet-Frumos!"

The dragon snorted, came out from his hiding-place, snatched up a sword and chopped up Fet-Frumos like a head of cabbage. Then, gathering up the pieces and stuffing them into two ragged saddlebags, he slung the bags over the saddle, lashed the horse and cried:

"Away, steed! Where you bore him living, there bear him dead!"

And the horse raced away, the earth humming under his hoofs as he ran! He made for the house of Ilana Cosinzana, for there he had been born and bred, tended and cared for, and he came to a halt at the front door.

Ilana Cosinzana came to the doorstep, but she saw no horseman come to ask for rest and shelter after a long ride; instead, she saw her own horse all in lather and spattered with blood. She rushed to the horse, pulled down the saddlebags, and, opening them, stepped back in horror.

"Poor Basil Fet-Frumos!" cried she. "So that is what they have done to you!"

And she began fitting his body together, piece by piece, till he became as he had been before.

This done, she ran to her pantry and brought out the dead and living water, the young boar and the bird's milk. Where pieces of flesh were missing, she fitted in pieces of the boar's flesh; and she sprinkled the dead water over Basil Fet-Frumos, and the pieces grew together. After that she bathed him with the living water, and he came back to life.

"Oh, what a long sleep I have had!" said he with a sigh.

"You would have slept and never wakened had I not been here," Ilana Cosinzana told him, and she put the jug of bird's milk to his lips.

Basil Fet-Frumos drank the milk, and with every sip was filled with fresh strength. And when he had drunk it all, he became stronger than ever he had been before.

He rose from the ground, and, recalling how the dragon had dealt with him, caught up his club and hastened to the palace with it.

He strode on and on without sparing himself until he came to the palace. And there, sitting at the table and feasting merrily while his own mother stood near and served them, were the witch and the dragon.

The witch and the dragon saw Basil Fet-Frumos, and they shook with fear. And Basil seized the witch with one hand and the dragon with the other, dragged them out into the courtyard and cut them to pieces. Then he lit a fire and burnt them, so that not a trace of them was left.

After that he went back inside, told his mother what he had done and kissed her tenderly. And there was more joy to come, for soon after that Basil Fet-Frumos married Ilana Cosinzana.

A merry feast was held to celebrate the wedding, and guests from far and near came to attend it. And at the head of the table sat the Bright Sun himself, drinking kegs of wine, smiling happily, and showering favours on all.

Basil Fet-Frumos and Ilana Cosinzana lived together for many years and were very happy, and they may still be alive if the time has not come for them to die.

THE STORY OF ZARNIYAR WHO HAD ALL HER WITS ABOUT HER

An Azerbaijan Fairy Tale



This is a story about a merchant named Mamed who lived in the city of Misar.

One day Mamed bethought him of going off to trade in a distant land. He bought a large number of goods, hired servants, and, bidding farewell to his family, set out on his way with his caravan.

Having travelled for many months and visited many different places, he came at last to a city he had never heard of before.

Here he decided to rest after his long travels and put up at a caravansary.

As he sat there eating and drinking, a stranger came up to him.

"You must have come from distant parts if you do not know the customs of this city, merchant," the man said.

"And what are the customs of this city?" Mamed asked.

"I'll tell you what they are. Every merchant who comes here presents a gift to the Shah. In return, the Shah invites the merchant to his palace and plays a game of nardi* with him."

* *Nardi*—backgammon.— *Tr.*

What was Mamed to do? He knew he had to go to the Shah whether he liked to or not. So, choosing the richest silks he had, he laid them out on a golden tray and set off for the palace.

The Shah took the gifts and plied the merchant with questions, asking him where he came from, what goods he traded in and what cities he had visited. Mamed answered him truthfully, and the Shah heard him out and said:

"Come to my palace tonight, and you and I will play nardi."

Mamed came to the palace at sunset and there was the Shah waiting for him, the nardi board set up before him.

"Hear me out, merchant," said the Shah. "I have a learned cat that can balance seven lighted lamps on its tail for hours on end. If not one of them falls off while we are playing, all your wares will be mine and you will be bound and thrown in a dungeon. But if the cat so much as moves from its place, all the riches in my treasury will be yours and you can do with me whatever you wish."

Mamed sat there listening to the Shah and he cursed himself silently for ever having come to this city. For he knew that he could not run away and to protest was out of the question. There was no way out but to do as the Shah said.

"One can easily lose one's life here, let alone one's wares!" thought he.

The Shah now called his learned cat, and the cat came and twirled its tail and sat down in front of him.

"Bring the lamps!" the Shah commanded.

And seven lamps were at once brought in and placed on the cat's tail.

The Shah moved closer to the board, and the game began.

The merchant could not help himself and kept glancing at the cat as he played. And the cat sat there as if turned to stone and did not so much as stir.

So a day passed, and a night, and then another two days and two nights, and the game went on. The cat sat there as before.

At last Mamed could bear it no longer.

"I cannot play any more! You win, Shah!" he cried.

That was all the Shah was waiting for. He called his servants and said to them:

"Bring me all of the merchant's wares and all his gold. And as for the merchant himself, bind him and throw him in a dungeon!"

The servants did as the Shah bade, and Mamed found himself in a dungeon. He sat there and he cursed the Shah and his learned cat and himself too for not having had the sense to pass the city by.

But now let us leave Mamed for a while, so that I can tell you about his wife Zarniyar.

Zarniyar was at home where Mamed had left her, waiting patiently for his return, but he did not come and she began worrying about him.

"Perhaps something has happened to him?" thought she.

One day, when she had lived with these anxious thoughts for a long time, Mamed's servant, who had gone with him on his travels, appeared at her doorstep. His face was streaked with dirt and his clothes were in tatters.

"Hear me, mistress!" cried he. "The Shah of a far-off land has imprisoned the master and has seized all his goods. I alone of the servants was able to run away and I barely escaped with my life. What are we going to do?"

Zarniyar bade the servant tell her the whole sad story. She heard him out to the end and then ordered a large number of mice to be caught and placed in a chest. When this had been done, she dressed herself in man's clothing, hid her long hair under a high fur cap, and, taking a bagful of gold and silver, set off at the head of a caravan to rescue her husband.

She journeyed without halting or delays of any kind and in due time arrived in the city where her husband was.

She bade some of her servants wait at the caravansary for her and the rest go with her to the Shah's palace.

Then, taking a large golden tray, she placed on it many costly gifts and set out for the palace accompanied by the servants, who walked behind her carrying the chest full of mice.

They neared the palace, and Zarniyar said to the servants:

"I shall be in the Shah's chamber playing nardi with him, and you must let the mice in through the door one by one."

The servants remained at the door with the chest, and Zarniyar entered the Shah's chamber.

Said she to the Shah:

"Long years to you, O ruler of rulers! I have brought you rich gifts, as is the custom of your country."

Taking her for a man, the Shah welcomed Zarniyar graciously, put the choicest delicacies before her and invited her to join him in a game of nardi.

"What are your rules, O ruler of rulers?" asked Zarniyar.

Said the Shah:

"We shall play until my learned cat moves from its place. If it does, then I will have lost the game, and you shall do with me whatever you wish."

"Very well," said Zarniyar. "Let it be as you say."

The Shah called his learned cat, and the cat padded in and sat down very solemnly in front of him. Then the Shah's servants appeared, bringing seven lamps which they placed on the cat's tail.

The game began, the Shah smiling as he played and only waiting for the young merchant to admit himself the loser.

Some time passed, and Zarniyar's servants opened the chest and let a mouse into the Shah's chamber.

When the cat saw the mouse its eyes began to glitter and it made as if to move from its place. But the Shah looked at it so sternly that it quietened at once and seemed frozen to the spot.

In a little while Zarniyar's servants let several more mice into the chamber. The mice began running up and down the floor and scuttling about near the walls. Now, this was too much for the cat, learned though it was. It gave a miaow, and, jumping up suddenly, whereupon all the seven lamps dropped to the floor, began chasing the mice. And shout as the Shah might, it would not listen to him.

Then only did Zarniyar call her servants, who rushed into the room, bound the Shah hand and foot and began belabouring him with leather thongs. And they would not stop even when he called for mercy.

"I will let out all my captives and give back to them all I took away, only spare me!" the Shah cried.

But Zarniyar's servants went on whipping him. And though his people heard the Shah's cries they would not come to his aid, for all had long grown weary of his cruelty and greed.

Zarniyar then freed her husband and all who were with him and had the Shah thrown into the dungeon.

After that Zarniyar and Mamed returned to their native city of Misar and lived there in peace and happiness.

SHEIDULLAH THE LOAFER

An Azerbaijan Fairy Tale



Long before our time there lived a man named Sheidullah who was a loafer and a ne'er-do-well and whose wife and children went hungry most of the time.

His wife would scold Sheidullah for not wanting to work, and Sheidullah would say:

"Never you mind! We are poor now, but we shall soon be rich."

"What do you mean!" the wife would exclaim. "How can that be when you lie there day after day without so much as moving a finger!"

But Sheidullah would repeat again:

"Just you wait! The time will come when we shall be rich."

The wife waited and the children waited, but nothing happened, and they remained as poor as ever.

"It's no use waiting," the wife said. "If this goes on we shall starve to death."

So Sheidullah decided to go to a wise man and ask his counsel about how he could stop being poor. He got ready and was soon on his way, and it was after he had walked for three days and three nights that he met a scraggy, skinny wolf.

"Where are you going, my good man?" the wolf asked.

"To a wise man to ask his counsel about how to become rich," Sheidullah replied.

"Perhaps he can tell you what I am to do to get well," said the wolf. "For two years now I have been suffering from pains in the stomach that give me no peace day or night."

"Very well," Sheidullah said, "I'll ask him about it."

And he went on his way.

He walked for another three days and three nights and he came to an apple-tree growing by the wayside.

"Where are you going, my good fellow?" the apple-tree asked him.

"To a wise man to ask his counsel about how to get rich without having to work."

"Perhaps the wise man can tell you what I am to do, too," said the apple-tree. "I bloom every spring, but my blossoms shrivel and fall off and I never bear any fruit."

"Very well, I'll ask him about it," Sheidullah said, and he went on his way again.

He walked for another three days and three nights and he came to a large lake.

All of a sudden a big fish thrust its head up out of the water.

"Where are you going, my good fellow?" asked the fish.

"To a wise man, to ask for his counsel."

"Won't you please ask him what I am to do to get well? For six years now I have been suffering from a sharp pain in the throat."

"Very well, I'll ask him," said Sheidullah, and went on.

He walked for three days and three nights, and he came to a place where grew many rose bushes. Under one of them sat an old man with a long grey beard.

"What do you want, Sheidullah?" the old man asked.

Sheidullah was startled.

"How did you know my name?" asked he. "But perhaps you are the wise man I was on my way to see?"

"Yes, I am," the old man replied. "Tell me quickly what it is you want of me."

Sheidullah told him why he had come.

"Is there nothing else you want to ask of me?" said the wise man.

"There is," Sheidullah replied, and he told the wise man what the wolf, the apple-tree and the fish wanted of him.

Said the wise man:

"A large gem is lodged in the throat of the fish. The fish will be cured as soon as the gem is removed. A large jug of silver is buried under the apple-tree. The tree will begin bearing fruit again as soon as the jug is taken away. As for the wolf, if he is to be cured, he must swallow the first loafer who comes along."

"And what about my own request?" Sheidullah asked.

"What you wish for has already been granted. You can go now."

Sheidullah was overjoyed and went home without another word.

He walked and he walked till he came to the lake where the fish was waiting for him.

"Has the wise man told you what I am to do?" it asked.

"A gem is lodged in your throat. Take it out and you will be well again," said Sheidullah, and he turned to go.

"Do help me, my good man, and take the gem out of my throat," the fish cried. "You will have cured me and gotten the gem for yourself at one and the same time."

"Why should I bother!" said Sheidullah. "I am going to become rich without moving a finger."

And with these words he went on.

He came to the apple-tree, and at the sight of him all its boughs began trembling and all its leaves rustling.

"Has the wise man told you what I am to do?" the apple-tree asked.

"Yes, he has," Sheidullah replied. "A large jug of silver lies buried under your roots. As soon as it is taken out you will bear fruit again."

And with these words Sheidullah turned to go.

Said the apple-tree in pleading tones:

"Please, Sheidullah, dig out the jug. You will be helping yourself too, for you will get the silver."

"Oh no, I can't be bothered. The wise man told me I would have everything, anyway," Sheidullah replied, and went on.

He walked and he walked till he met the scraggy wolf.

"Did the wise man tell you what I am to do?" he asked, trembling in impatience. "Don't keep me in suspense, tell me at once!"

"Eat up the first loafer who comes along, and you will be well," said Sheidullah.

The wolf thanked Sheidullah and began asking him about all he had seen and heard on the way and Sheidullah told him of the fish and the apple-tree and of what they had asked of him.

"But I did not bother with them," he said, "for I will be rich anyway."

The wolf listened and was overjoyed.

"I need not search for a loafer," thought he, "for he has come to me himself. There is no one in the world more lazy than this man."

And pouncing on Sheidullah, he gobbled him up on the spot!

And that was the end of Sheidullah the Loafer.

ANAIT

An Armenian Fairy Tale



I

Once on a morning in spring, young Vachagan, the only son of Tsar Vache, stood on his balcony. Birds were singing in the garden, many different birds, but when the nightingale began his song, they all fell silent. Listening to him, they tried to learn the secret of his music and to repeat the melodies they had learned: one would imitate his twitter, another his warble, a third his whistle. But Vachagan paid them no heed, for his heart was troubled.

The Tsarina Ashkhen, his mother, came up to him and said:

"You look unhappy, my dear son. Tell me the reason for your sadness."

But Vachagan only sighed.

"I wish I could go off by myself somewhere," he said.

"Somewhere?" the Tsarina said. "Is it not the village of Atsik that draws you, where lives a girl named Anait?"

"How did you learn about her, Mother?"

"The nightingales told me about her. But do not forget, Vachagan, that you are the son of the Afghan Tsar, and the son of a tsar must wed a princess. There are many to choose from. The Tsar of Georgia has three daughters, and the Prince of Gugar has one. Then there is the daughter of the Prince of Sunik, a girl renowned for her beauty, and that of Varsenik, the commander of the royal host. They are all worthy of your love, my son."

"I want Anait alone, Mother!"

And with these words Vachagan ran down the balcony steps.

II

Vachagan had just passed his twentieth birthday. He was a pale youth, and not too strong.

"Vachagan, my son," his father would say to him, "all my hopes rest on you. You must marry, for such is the law of life."

But Vachagan put aside all thought of marriage and spent the days hunting in the mountains. Many princes tried to court his friendship, but he avoided them and took no one with him on his hunting trips save his brave and devoted servant Vaghinak. No one meeting them could have told which was the prince and which the servant, for they both dressed in simple hunting garb, with a bow and arrow over one shoulder and a broad dagger at the belt.

Wanderings over the countryside did Vachagan a world of good. With every day that passed he grew stronger and healthier.

One day Vachagan and Vaghinak had wandered into the village of Atsik and sat down by a spring to rest. Just then some village girls came to the spring for water, and Vachagan, who was thirsty, asked them for a drink. One of them filled her jug and offered it to him, but another, a girl of great beauty, snatched the jug from her and poured out the water. Then she refilled the jug, but only to pour the water out again. Vachagan's throat was parched, so thirsty was he, but the girl kept on filling and emptying the jug. Only when she had filled it for the sixth time did she hold it out to him.

Vachagan drank greedily.

"Why did you not give me the water the first time?" he asked of the girl. "Were you teasing me?"

"I would not tease a stranger," the girl replied. "But you were tired

and hot, and the cold water might have harmed you. That was why I did not give it you at once."

Her reply surprised Vachagan. Not only was the girl beautiful, but clever too.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Anait," the girl replied.

"Who is your father?"

"My father is the village shepherd. But why do you ask?"

"Is it a sin to ask?"

"It is not and you, too, must tell me who you are and where you come from."

"Shall I lie to you or shall I tell you the truth?"

"That is up to you."

"Well, then, the truth is that I cannot yet tell you who I am. But I give you my word that I will soon."

"Very well. And now give me back my jug."

And having said goodbye to the prince, Anait had taken the jug and gone away.

The hunters had returned home, and Vaghinak, trusty servant that he was, had told the tsarina of all that had taken place. Thus had Vachagan's mother learnt his secret.

III

Vachagan would not hear of marrying anyone but Anait, and the tsar and tsarina had no choice but to give in. Vaghinak and two nobles were sent to Atsik to act as matchmakers.

Anait's father, the shepherd Aran, welcomed them warmly and spread out a carpet for them to sit on.

"What a beautiful carpet!" Vaghinak said. "Was it your wife who wove it?"

"I am a widower," Aran said. "My wife died ten years ago. The carpet was woven by Anait, my daughter."

"It is more beautiful than any in the Tsar's palace. And we are pleased it is so. For we come as matchmakers on the Tsar's behalf. He wishes you to give your daughter in marriage to his only son."

The nobles expected Aran either to shake his head in disbelief or to leap up from his place in joy. But the shepherd did neither. He hung his head and began tracing patterns on the carpet with his finger.



Said Vaghinak:

"What makes you so sad, Aran, my brother? We have brought you glad tidings. We have no wish to take away your daughter by force. Whether she weds the prince or not depends on you."

"I will not force my daughter," Aran said. "If she agrees to marry the prince, well and good."

Just then Anait came in with a basket of ripe fruit. Bowing to the visitors, she laid the fruit out on a tray and served it to them, and then sat down at her rug frame and began to weave. The nobles watched her, marvelling at the quickness of her fingers.

"Why do you work alone, Anait?" Vaghinak asked. "I have heard that you have many pupils."

"So I have," Anait replied, "but I have let them all go to gather grapes."

"I have also heard that you teach your pupils to read and write."

"That is true," Anait said. "Even our shepherds are learning to read. The trunks of the trees in our forests are covered with writing. Walls, rocks and cliffs bear inscriptions in charcoal. One man will write a word, then another, and so it goes."

"With us, learning is held in less esteem," said Vaghinak. "The townsfolk are lazy. But stop weaving for a moment, Anait, I have something to show you. See what fine gifts the Tsar sends you!"

And Vaghinak brought out precious stones and gowns of silk.

Anait glanced at them.

"Why is the Tsar so gracious to me?" she asked.

"Vachagan, the son of the tsar, met you by a spring and took a liking to you. We are now come by the Tsar's orders to ask you to marry Vachagan. This ring, this necklace, these bracelets and everything else are for you."

"Then that young hunter was the Tsar's son?"

"Yes."

"He is a fine young man. But does he have a trade?"

"He is the son of the Tsar, Anait, and all of the Tsar's subjects are his servants. What need has he of a trade?"

"That may be so, but fate often plays tricks on us, and he who is a lord today may become a servant tomorrow."

Anait's words took the nobles aback.

"Then you refuse to marry the prince simply because he has been taught no trade?" they asked.

"Yes. Take back all you have brought me. And tell the prince that I like him, but have vowed not to marry a man without a trade."

Seeing her so firm, the tsar's envoys pressed Anait no more. Back they went to the palace and they told the tsar of Anait's refusal to marry the prince.

The Tsar and Tsarina were overjoyed, for they were certain that Vachagan would now give up all thought of this girl. But Vachagan surprised them.

"Anait is right, I must learn a trade," he said.

The Tsar called a council of his nobles, and after talking it over, they all agreed that the best and most suitable trade for a prince was brocade weaving.

A craftsman was at once brought from Persia, and by the end of the year he had taught Vachagan all he knew. And Vachagan, overjoyed that he had done as Anait wished and mastered a trade, wove a length of brocade and sent it to her.

Anait received the gift joyfully, agreed to marry the prince, and sent him a rug she had made.

Preparations for the wedding were at once begun, and Vachagan and Anait became man and wife.

IV

But sorrow came to Vachagan in the midst of rejoicing, for soon after the wedding, Vaghinak, his faithful servant and friend, disappeared. The search went on for a long time, but he was not found and at last they lost all hope of ever seeing him again. The years passed, the Tsar and Tsarina died, and Vachagan became Tsar.

One day Anait said to her husband:

"I notice, my Tsar, that you know but little of what goes on in your tsardom. People keep the truth from you, they would have you believe that all is well. But perhaps that is not altogether so. It would be wise on your part to travel over the land in the guise of a merchant or a beggar even, for then you would see all and learn all for yourself."

"You are right, Anait," Vachagan replied. "But how can I leave? Who will rule in my absence?"

"I will," Anait said, and added: "Nor need anyone know that you are away."

"Very well. Then I shall set out on my travels tomorrow. But if I am not back in twenty days, know that I have met with misfortune."

On the next day Vachagan dressed himself in the garb of a peasant and set forth from home.

After a time he came to the town of Perozh in the centre of which was a large square with a marketplace on it.

Vachagan looked about him, and his gaze was drawn to a crowd of people who were following an old man. The old man moved slowly, and as he walked, the way was cleared before him and bricks were placed under his feet for him to step on.

Vachagan asked of a passer-by who the old man was.

"Is it possible that you do not know!" the man exclaimed. "Why, he is the head priest and so pious that he will not even step on the ground for fear of crushing some insect."

Then a rug was spread out on the square, and the head priest kneeled on it to rest himself. Vachagan pushed through the crowd to get nearer to the old man and hear what he had to say. The priest noticed him and knew him for a stranger.

"Who are you and what do you do for a living?" he asked.

"I come from distant parts," Vachagan replied, "and am here to seek work."

"Good. Come with me. I will give you work and will pay you well."

To this Vachagan agreed, and the head priest turned to his helpers and uttered a word of command.

The priests at once left the square and returned after a time followed by bearers carrying wares of all kinds. Then the head priest himself rose to go, and Vachagan went after him.

They came to the city gates, and the head priest blessed the people, who soon dispersed, leaving the priests, the bearers and Vachagan to continue their journey alone. They left the town behind them and soon afterwards came to a high wall with a gate in it. The head priest brought out a key, and the gate swung open.

A large square lay before them, in the centre of which rose a temple. The bearers set down the bundles they were carrying, and the head priest led them and Vachagan to the temple, and, opening an iron door, said:

"Go in, you will be given work there."

They went in silently and found themselves in a dark underground passage. The head priest now locked the door behind them, and, knowing that the way back was cut off, they moved on.

VI

They walked for a long time, and when a feeble light showed in the distance, went toward it and soon approached a stone cave from which came loud groans and cries. Straining to hear more, they looked round them and were surprised to see a shadowy figure in the darkness of the passage. As it came nearer it gradually took on shape. Vachagan stepped toward it.

"Who are you—man or devil?" he called loudly. "If you are a man, tell us where it is we are."

The phantom moved closer and stopped, trembling, before them. It was a man, but a man with the face of a corpse, and so thin that his ribs showed through his skin.

"Come with me. I will show you everything," he said with a sigh.

They followed him down a narrow corridor and came to a second cave, many men lying on the floor there in their death throes. The second cave led to a third where stood huge cauldrons in which food seemed to be cooking. Vachagan bent over one of them and at once stepped back in horror, not saying a word to his comrades. Passing through the cave, they found themselves in yet another passage. Here, in the dim half-light toiled several hundred men, all of them with the look of death on their faces. Some were weaving, some sewing.

Said the man who had brought them there:

"All of us were lured here by that devil of a priest in just the same way as you. I do not know how long I have been here, for there is no day and no night in this dungeon, but only everlasting dusk. All who arrived here with me are dead. The priests who lure men here work those of them who have a trade to death, and slaughter the rest. These they boil in the cauldrons you have seen and force us to eat of their flesh."

Looking closely at the speaker, Vachagan now saw him to be none other than his own servant Vaghinak. But he said nothing lest the joy of their reunion snap the thin thread that bound Vaghinak to life.

VII

When Vaghinak had left them, Vachagan asked the men who were with him who they were and what they did for a living. One turned out to be a tailor, another a weaver, the others simple labourers, but before

Vachagan had had time to ask them anything else, there came the sound of footsteps, and a priest with the face of a fiend appeared before them, accompanied by a group of armed men.

"Are you the new arrivals?" the priest asked.

"Yes, O merciful priest," Vachagan replied.

"Which of you have a trade?"

"All of us do!" Vachagan, who knew that only this could save them, said. "We are weavers and can weave brocade which is worth more than its weight in gold."

"Can that be true?"

"That you can find out for yourself."

"Very well, I will. Now tell me what tools you will need and then set to work."

"We will work hard and you will be pleased with us," said Vachagan. "But I must warn you that we do not eat meat and may die if forced to eat it."

"Very well," said the priest. "You shall have bread instead. But should the brocade you weave prove to be less valuable than you would have me believe, I will have you put to death."

The tools were brought, and Vachagan set to work and soon had a large length of brocade ready. It was very beautiful and covered with secret lettering which could only be deciphered by the initiated.

When the priest saw the brocade he was delighted.

Said Vachagan:

"This brocade is worth more than any you have ever seen, for the figures you see on it are magic figures, and only the all-wise Tsarina Anait will know what they mean. So if you want to get a good price for it, offer it to her."

The priest was amazed, and, not wanting anyone to share in his profits, set out for Vachagan's palace.

VIII

Anait ruled the realm wisely and well, and none suspected that the Tsar was away. But she herself was filled with anxiety. Ten days had passed since the appointed time, but Vachagan had not returned. Anait's nights were filled with fearful dreams, by day she was visited by strange visions. Vachagan's dog whined piteously, his horse would not touch his oats, the chickens crowed like cocks, the cocks screeched like

pheasants, and the river waters rolled with a dull, hushed sound. The usually fearless Anait was terrified.

One morning she was told of the arrival at the palace of a merchant who had brought rich wares.

Anait ordered him to be brought in.

The man who entered had a terrible face. He bowed to Anait and held out a silver tray on which lay a length of brocade. Anait looked it over.

"What is the price of this piece?" she asked.

"It is worth a great deal, Your Majesty, even if the workmanship and material alone are considered. And do not forget my industry and zeal in bringing it here."

"All the same, why should it be so very costly?" Anait asked.

"It is possessed of a power which is beyond price, Your Majesty. Just look at the pattern. Those are not simple figures but magical ones. He who wears a garment made of this brocade will never know sorrow."

"Can it be so?" Anait asked, and she unfolded the piece of fabric and looked it over again. Inscribed on it were letters that had been worked into an intricate pattern. Anait read the message silently:

"My own Anait, I am held prisoner and suffer the torments of hell. The man who will have brought you this is a fiend. Vaghinak is with me. You will find us east of Perozh in the dungeons of a temple enclosed by high walls. Come to our help or we perish. Vachagan."

Shaken to the depths of her being, Anait ran over the message a second and a third time.

"You are right," she said. "These figures are magic figures and possess the power to cheer. Only this morning I was sad, and now my heart feels light. Your brocade is truly priceless. I should not be sorry to give up half my tsardom for it. However, you must know yourself that no work of art is greater than its creator."

"May God grant you a long life, Tsarina, you speak truly!"

"Then you must bring me the man who wove this brocade. I wish to reward him as well as yourself."

"Most gracious Tsarina," the priest said, "I do not know who he is. I purchased the brocade from a Jew in India who said he had got it from an Arab."

"But you told me yourself how much the work and material cost you, which means that you did not buy the brocade but had it made."

"Most gracious Tsarina I only repeat what I was told in India. I—"

"Silence!" Anait cried wrathfully. "I know who you are. Servants! Seize this man and throw him in a dungeon!"

When her command had been carried out, Anait ordered her trumpeters to sound an alarm. The townsfolk, whispering anxiously among themselves, gathered by the palace. No one knew what had happened.

Anait stepped out on to the balcony. She was clothed in battle armour.

"Hear me, good folk!" said she. "The life of your tsar is in danger. Let all who love him follow me! We must reach the town of Perozh by midday."

All were armed within the hour. Anait mounted her horse, and, shouting "Forward!", set off at a gallop for Perozh. She did not stop on the way and only reined in her horse on the town's main square.

The townsfolk prostrated themselves before her.

"Where is the governor of this town?" Anait asked.

"Here I am, Your Majesty," said the governor, stepping forward.

"Do you know of the dreadful things that are taking place in the temple here?"

"Indeed I do not, Your Majesty." And the man bowed.

"Do you know, at least, where the temple is?"

"You jest, Your Majesty. Of course I do."

"Then take me there."

The governor, followed by the townsfolk, led Anait to the temple.

Thinking that pilgrims had arrived, the priests unlocked the first of the iron doors. Anait at once rode out on to the temple square and ordered the doors of the temple to be opened. Only then did the priests realise what had happened. The head priest rushed at the mounted Tsarina but Anait's horse trampled him to death with its hoofs.

Meanwhile Anait's warriors had arrived, and the remaining priests were quickly dispatched. The townsfolk looked on in fear.

"Come up here!" Anait cried. "See what is concealed in the sanctuary of your gods!"

When the doors of the temple were broken, a fearful sight met the townsfolk's eyes.

Men who looked like ghosts poured out from the dungeons. Some were very ill and almost too weak to stand. Others, blinded by the light of day, staggered and fell. The last to come out were Vachagan and his friend Vaghinak. They moved slowly, and, fearing that the bright light might blind them, kept their eyes closed!

Anait's warriors burst into the dungeons and carried out the dead

bodies and the instruments of torture. The townsfolk helped them.

Anait joined Vachagan and Vaghinak in the tent that had been put up for them. Husband and wife sat down side by side. For a while nothing was said. Then Vaghinak bent and kissed Anait's hand.

"You have saved our lives today, Tsarina!" he said.

"Anait saved us long ago, the day she asked you if the son of your Tsar had a trade," said Vachagan.

X

News of Tsar Vachagan's fearful adventure spread throughout the towns and villages and carried to foreign lands. All gave praise to Vachagan and Anait, and the ashugs, or minstrels, made up songs about them. The songs did not come down to us, but this tale I have shared with you did.

THE TSAR AND THE WEAVER

An Armenian Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived a Tsar.

One day he was sitting on his throne when the envoy of another tsar was announced. The envoy walked into the tsar's chamber, drew a circle round his throne with a piece of chalk and moved aside. He did not say a word.

The Tsar was puzzled.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked.

But the envoy made no reply.

This made the Tsar anxious. He called his viziers and councillors and ordered them to explain what the line drawn round his throne could mean.

The viziers and councillors examined the line carefully, but found nothing to say.

The Tsar was very angry.

"Shame on you!" he cried. "Shame on you! Is there no one in the whole of my land who can tell me what I wish to know?"

And the Tsar gave strict orders for all the wise men of his tsardom to be summoned to his palace with the warning that if they failed to explain the meaning of the line their heads would be cut off.

The viziers rushed to do the Tsar's bidding. They scoured the city and the villages and knocked at every door. One day they came to a

small house, which they entered and found quite empty save for a cradle that was hanging there and rocking all by itself.

"What can it mean?" the viziers asked. "Why is the cradle rocking? There is no one here."

They stood there marvelling and then passed into the second room. Here, too, was a cradle and it, too, was rocking although no one was about.

The viziers were much surprised and climbed out on to the roof of the house. Wheat had been laid out on it to dry, and though there were birds wheeling over it, they dared not peck it, for a fan of reeds had been fixed to the roof and was swaying from side to side.

The Tsar's envoys were more surprised than ever.

"Why is the fan swaying?" they asked. "There is no wind, and not a leaf is stirring on the trees."

They climbed down from the roof, and, coming into the house again, went into the third and last room. There they saw a man sitting at a loom and weaving cloth.

"Come, weaver, tell us, why are the cradles rocking of themselves in your house and the fan swaying on the roof?" they asked.

"There is nothing unusual about it," the weaver replied. "I am doing it all myself."

"You dare to laugh at us!" the viziers cried. "How can you be doing it when you are sitting here, weaving?"

"Nothing could be simpler," the weaver said. "I have three strings attached to my loom. One I have tied to the first cradle, the second to the second cradle, and the third to the fan. As I weave, the strings move and set the cradles and the fan in motion."

The Tsar's envoys looked closer and saw that the weaver had not lied, for three strings were indeed attached to the loom, two of them running to the cradles and one to the fan.

"The weaver is indeed wise," cried they. "He is just the man we need! Come with us to the Tsar, weaver, perhaps you will be able to tell him what he wants to know."

"And what is it that he wants to know?" the weaver asked.

Said the viziers:

"The envoy of a Tsar from a distant land recently paid him a visit and drew a line round the throne with a piece of chalk, and no one, neither the Tsar nor any of his attendants and councillors, can guess what this means. So we have been trying to find a wise man who can explain the meaning of the line. If you are able to do it, the Tsar will reward you richly."

The weaver listened to the viziers and fell into a deep reverie. Then he picked up two knucklebones, the kind children play with, dropped them

into his pocket and went out into the yard where he caught a chicken.

The viziers were quite taken aback.

"What do you need the chicken for?" asked they.

"You'll see," the weaver replied, and he put the chicken he had caught in a basket and set off for the Tsar's palace together with the viziers.

They were soon there, and the weaver entered the palace and greeted the Tsar. He glanced at the line drawn round the throne and at the man who had drawn it and flung the two knucklebones at his feet. And as if in reply to this the other brought out a handful of millet from his pocket and threw it on the floor.

The weaver smiled, and, taking the chicken out of the basket, set it down in front of the scattered grains. The chicken pecked at them hungrily, and before long not a grain was left.

The stranger hurried out of the palace.

The Tsar and his attendants threw up their hands in wonder.

"What was the meaning of the man's actions?" the Tsar asked.

"He was trying to tell you, O Tsar," the weaver said, "that his Tsar had declared war on us and that his armies were about to encircle this city. He wanted to know too whether you would fight or surrender. That is the meaning of the line he drew round your throne."

"Yes, I believe you are right," the Tsar said. "But I cannot understand why you threw the two knucklebones at his feet."

Said the weaver:

"I did it to let him know that we are far stronger than they and that they can never defeat us. In plain words the meaning of my action was: 'You are mere children compared to us and would do well to stay at home and play knucklebones instead of waging war.'"

"I see!" said the Tsar. "What you say makes it all clear. But I still don't know why the stranger threw the millet on the floor and why you let the chicken out of the basket."

"That is not hard to explain, either," said the weaver. "The stranger was trying to tell you that the armies of his Tsar number many men, as many as the grains he threw on the floor. And I had the chicken peck up every last grain to show him that if they dared march against us not one of his warriors would be left alive. And he must have understood what I meant, for he retired in haste."

The Tsar was greatly pleased and showered the weaver with gifts.

"Stay with me in my palace, weaver," said he, "and I shall make you my grand vizier."

"Thank you very much, O Tsar, but I have no wish to be a vizier, I have my own affairs to attend to," the weaver said.

And with that he went away.

DEER-CHILD AND YELENA THE BEAUTIFUL

A Georgian Fairy Tale



It may be true or it may not be, but there was once a very rich Tsar. One day he said to his hunters:

"Go out and kill the first animal you see."

The hunters went hunting and the first animal they saw was a doe. They took aim and were about to shoot her, as the Tsar had ordered, when they saw that a little boy was feeding at her udder. Seeing them, the child stopped sucking, threw his arms about the doe's neck and fell to kissing and fondling her.

The hunters were astonished.

They carried the boy off with them and took him to the Tsar, telling him what they had seen.

Now, the Tsar had a baby son who was the same age as the little boy the hunters had found, so he had them both christened together, and the foundling was named Deer-Child.

Deer-Child was brought up together with the prince, they slept in the same room and were suckled by the same nurse.

Some there are who grow by the year, but these two grew by the day and were twelve years old before they knew it. The Tsar smiled happily as he watched them.



One day the two boys went out to the fields with their bows and arrows. The prince shot an arrow, and the arrow hit the jug of water an old woman was carrying and knocked off its handle.

The old woman turned and said:

"Curse you I will not, for you are an only son, but may your heart be broken for love of Yelena the Beautiful."

Deer-Child was filled with wonder.

"What does she mean?" he said.

The prince did not reply, but from that moment he could think of nothing and no one save Yelena the Beautiful. For love for her had been born in his heart and gave him no peace.

Three weeks passed. The prince went about like one in a dream and seemed but half alive. Love for a maid he had never seen was draining him of health and strength.

Deer-Child was sorry for his foster-brother.

"May I die if I do not win Yelena the Beautiful for you!" said he.

Then he went to the Tsar and said:

"Father, order the blacksmith to forge greaves of iron for me and an iron bow and arrows, for I must go to seek Yelena the Beautiful."

The Tsar did as Deer-Child asked, and an iron bow and arrows weighing all of five poods as well as a pair of iron greaves were fashioned for him.

Said Deer-Child to the Tsar:

"Have no fear, Father. You can depend on me. Wait two years for us and remember: we return with glory or not at all."

And the two brothers took leave of their father and set out from home together.

They walked and they walked till they came to a dense forest. They entered the forest and soon saw, looming ahead, a cliff with a huge house at the top and a lovely garden in front of it. But they did not know that in that house dwelled giants who fed on the flesh of men.

Said the prince to Deer-Child:

"I am tired, my brother. Let us rest here a while."

"Very well," agreed Deer-Child.

And the prince lay down on the ground and closed his eyes.

"Lie here and sleep," said Deer-Child, "and I will go to the garden yonder and bring you some fruit to eat."

Not as one brother for another but as a father for his son, so did Deer-Child care for the prince.

He came to the garden, and, finding the finest apple-tree, began to pick the apples.

All of a sudden who should come storming out of the house but a nine-headed giant.

"Who dares to enter this garden?" he cried. "No birds fly in the sky here and no ants crawl over the ground for fear of me!"

"I, Deer-Child, dare to enter your garden!" the youth said in a loud voice.

At this the giant drew back, muttering to himself in fear and anger, for he and his friends knew that Deer-Child's coming meant that they were doomed. Indeed, so terrified were the giants that they rushed in all directions, trying to find a place to hide. But Deer-Child was quicker than they and killed them all, only one of them escaping with his life, a five-headed giant named Babahanjomi who had hidden himself in the attic.

Having satisfied himself that the giants were dead, Deer-Child went back to where his brother was waiting for him and told him that the giants' house and all their riches were now theirs.

The brothers began walking about in the garden and amusing themselves in various ways, and Babahanjomi, who could see them through the attic window, sat there and trembled with fear.

But he got over his fear finally, and climbing down from the attic, went up to Deer-Child.

"Spare my life and I will be as a brother to you," said he.

Deer-Child smiled.

"What is it that has forced you to leave your home and roam the world?" the giant asked.

Said Deer-Child:

"There is something that we are out to do. If you do not help us and we fail to do it, I will kill you as I killed the other giants. We are seeking Yelena the Beautiful, and you must seek her with us."

Now, Babahanjomi had a little house which he could carry on his back wherever he went.

"Get into this little house of mine, and we shall go to seek Yelena the Beautiful," said he. "But it will not be easy to win her. There are many who would have her for themselves."

The two brothers climbed into the giant's house, and the giant hoisted the house onto his back and set out on his way.

Three months or more passed and he reached the bank of a river.

"I am tired, let us stop and rest here," said the prince.

And Babahanjomi being even more tired, the brothers got out of his little house and all three sat down on the bank for a rest. They were very thirsty and tried drinking the river water, but found it much too salty.

"Why is the water salty?" asked Deer-Child, surprised.

"It is not ordinary water but tears," Babahanjomi replied. "There is a five-headed giant living higher up the river. He, too, loves Yelena the Beautiful, but she has refused him, and this has made him so unhappy that he weeps rivers of tears."

Deer-Child was filled with wonder.

"I am not I if I do not win Yelena the Beautiful for my brother," said he.

They went to see the giant who lived higher up the river, and Deer-Child asked him whether his love for Yelena the Beautiful was as great as everyone said it was.

The giant began to weep, and so copious were his tears that they formed a river.

"I care not if I die if only I can take one look at her," said he.

"That you shall, I promise," said Deer-Child.

And having taken leave of the giant, they walked on.

Some months passed, and they were still on their way. And though they shot and ate every wild animal they saw, there was not enough food for them.

One day they came to a small grove.

Deer-Child looked round him.

"There's a village yonder," said he. "I shall go and ask, perhaps someone in the village knows where to look for Yelena the Beautiful."

And leaving Babahanjomi with his house on his back and the prince inside it, Deer-Child set out for the village and soon came to a hut with an old woman standing beside it.

"Tell me, mother, do you know where I can find Yelena the Beautiful?" he asked.

The old woman was much surprised. She knew how hard it was to so much as come near Yelena the Beautiful and wondered at how simple the youth was.

"To find her is not easy, my son," said she. "The great Tsar Wind is in love with her, and he is ever seeking ways of carrying her off from her home. That is why she is kept behind nine locks and never sees the light of day."

And the old woman went on to tell Deer-Child the whereabouts of Yelena the Beautiful.

"The castle in which she lives with her mother and brothers stands in a large garden and is surrounded by a high wall," said she.

"But how are we to get to her?" Deer-Child asked. "My brother has set his heart on marrying her."

"It is not an easy thing to do," said the old woman. "Yelena the Beautiful sets every man who comes to woo her three tasks and promises to marry him if he carries them out. But if he fails to do it, her brothers kill him."

Deer-Child smiled. He was sure that there was nothing Yelena the Beautiful might think of that he and his brother could not do. So, feeling very sure of himself, he went back to the place where he had left the prince and the giant.

He found them waiting for him and climbed into the house on the giant's back, and the giant did as he told him and made for the castle of Yelena the Beautiful.

They reached it soon enough, and Deer-Child climbed down from the giant's back and went inside.

Now, the mother of Yelena the Beautiful was a sorceress, and she could both kill a man and bring him back to life.

She looked at Deer-Child, and, seeing him so tall and strong and handsome, could not keep her eyes off him.

"Who are you and what brings you here?" she asked.

"I come as a friend," said Deer-Child.

"But what do you want?"

"I want Yelena the Beautiful to marry my brother."

"Stay here," said the mother of Yelena the Beautiful, "and wait for my three sons to return, they are out hunting in the forest. You will talk to them, and it will all be arranged."

So Deer-Child sat down in the garden to wait for the brothers of Yelena the Beautiful.

And the prince and Babahanjomi, who were waiting for Deer-Child, decided to go and see for themselves how he was faring, for they feared that the great Tsar Wind might have killed him.

Darkness fell, and the brothers of Yelena the Beautiful came back from the forest, one of them carrying a whole deer over his shoulder, another, a roe, and the third, a tree he had cut down.

They smelt a stranger and stopped short.

"Whom have you let into the house, Mother?" asked they.

"One who has come as a friend, my sons. You must not harm him," the mother replied.

By this time Babahanjomi and the prince were in the castle too, and the prince stood there and waited to see what would happen.

The brothers of Yelena the Beautiful began skinning the deer, and Deer-Child came up and joined them, and so quick was he that he had skinned the whole carcase before they finished skinning one of the legs.

The three brothers looked at him and were filled with wonder.

They sat down to eat, and Deer-Child swallowed such great hunks of meat that the three brothers only stared.

They finished eating and went to bed, and on the following morning Yelena the Beautiful called her three brothers to her side.

"If the prince carries out the three tasks I set him, I will marry him; if he does not, I won't," said she.

The prince was brought before her, and Yelena the Beautiful spoke to him and explained what she wanted, but her mother had cast a spell on him, and he stood there not uttering a sound, too dazed to understand what was happening.

Yelena the Beautiful flew into a temper.

"Leave me!" she cried, and the prince stumbled from the chamber like one drunk.

"What did she say to you?" asked Deer-Child.

"I don't know, my brother, I was too dazed," the prince replied.

Deer-Child was very angry, and he went and asked Yelena the Beautiful to allow his brother to present himself before her a second time. Yelena the Beautiful agreed to this, but the second time too the prince was silent all the time he was with her and left the chamber in a daze.

Deer-Child told Babahanjomi all about it, they put their heads together and agreed as to what they should do, and Deer-Child went to see Yelena the Beautiful again and asked her to allow the prince to present himself before her for the third time.

The prince, who had again been bewitched by her mother, stood before Yelena the Beautiful and could not move or speak. But Babahanjomi stole into the chamber, and, taking out some magic writings, of the kind used to break spells, threw them down on the floor.

The walls swayed, the spell was broken, and the prince ran up to Yelena the Beautiful and seized her by the hand.

"Now you are mine!" he cried.

When he saw them come out of the chamber together, Deer-Child was overjoyed. And Yelena the Beautiful, who had thought that no one would ever succeed in breaking her mother's spell, beamed, so happy was she to be marrying the prince.

The following morning the bride and groom went for a walk in the garden, and Deer-Child stood watching them. But the great Tsar Wind saw Yelena the Beautiful and flew at the prince. He lifted him high, spun him round and round and dashed him to the ground. Then he

caught up Yelena the Beautiful and carried her off with him.

When Deer-Child saw his brother lying lifeless on the ground, he was prostrated with grief and forgot all about Yelena the Beautiful. He now recalled that the old woman had warned him about the great Tsar Wind, but, alas, it was too late.

Deer-Child sat there and wept, and the mother of Yelena the Beautiful came up to him and said:

"Do not weep, for I will bring your brother back to life. But the great Tsar Wind has carried off my daughter, and how we are to get her back I don't know."

She brought out a kerchief and passed it over the face of the prince, and the prince at once came back to life.

"I have slept a long time," he said, rubbing his eyes.

But when he looked round him and saw that Yelena the Beautiful was gone, he began to weep.

Said Deer-Child to Babahanjomi:

"The great Tsar Wind has carried off the prince's bride. We must get her back for him."

"May I drop dead on the spot if I do not help you!" Babahanjomi said. "Look in my right ear, and you'll find a saddle there, look in my left ear, and you'll find a bridle and a whip. Take them out and saddle me, and we shall set off at once."

And Deer-Child did as Babahanjomi said. He took the saddle out of his right ear and the bridle out of his left ear, and he lashed the saddle to his back and passed five bits through his five mouths.

"Now jump on my back," Babahanjomi said, "and whip me till you flay nine strips of skin from it. After that hold on, and though I will fly as fast as the wind you must not be afraid!"

Before doing as Babahanjomi told him, Deer-Child went to say goodbye to the prince, his brother.

"Stay here and wait for us," said he, "we are off to seek Yelena the Beautiful."

Then he jumped on the giant's back and lashed him with his whip till he had flayed nine strips of skin from it. The giant moaned loudly, struck the ground hard, and swept up to the sky. And he did not come down again till he saw a field spreading below. There was an old woman in the field, and Deer-Child asked her if she knew where the great Tsar Wind lived.

The old woman began to sob and to wail.

"What brings you here, my son?" she cried. "You cannot fool the great Tsar Wind. He will soon know you are here and kill us all! He has

a maiden here so lovely that none can compare with her. And he fears lest she be stolen from him."

"It is this maiden that I am seeking," Deer-Child said. "You must show me the great Tsar Wind's castle."

"Very well," said the old woman, but her voice quivered and she trembled with fear.

And Deer-Child jumped down from the giant's back, hid the saddle in his right ear and the bridle and the whip in his left ear and followed the old woman.

Babahanjomi was left alone. He walked about, doing whatever came into his head, and, seeing the Tsar Wind's chickens, ate them all up.

The old woman brought Deer-Child to the great Tsar Wind's castle and hurried away.

Now, that very morning the Tsar had gone out hunting, and Yelena the Beautiful was left alone in the castle and sat there weeping.

Deer-Child came to the door of her chamber, kicked it open and entered.

"How did you get here?" asked Yelena the Beautiful. "And what has happened to the prince, my bridegroom?"

And she embraced and kissed Deer-Child who told her of all that had taken place.

"I have come to take you away from here," said he.

"You will never be able to do it!" cried Yelena the Beautiful. "The great Tsar Wind, may he be cursed, will kill us both!"

Then Deer-Child went to the old woman who had shown him the way to the great Tsar Wind's castle and asked her to tell him how he was to carry off Yelena the Beautiful and rid them of the great Tsar Wind.

Said the old woman:

"You must go and tell Yelena the Beautiful that the next time the great Tsar Wind goes hunting, she must decorate the house with flowers and when he returns, meet him with a sorrowful look on her face, to make it appear that she missed him sorely."

Next morning, the moment the great Tsar Wind left the castle, Yelena the Beautiful went to the garden, picked some flowers and busied herself decorating the house with them.

Evening came, the great Tsar Wind returned, and he marvelled to see the house full of flowers.

"Why did you bring all these flowers into the house, Yelena the Beautiful?" he asked.

"What else was I to do?" said she. "I have to find something to amuse me while you are away. If only you showed me where you hid your soul, I would not be so lonely and bored."

"What do you want with my soul, my beauty?"

"Cannot you guess! If I knew where it was, I could kiss and fondle it while waiting for you to return, for I miss you sorely whenever you are away. Do tell me where you have hidden it."

"Very well," said the great Tsar Wind. "I will."

And taking her to the roof of his castle, he said:

"Do you see that deer in the glade yonder? Three men are kept busy cutting grass for him, and he eats it up so fast that it is all they can do to cut enough. Well, in that deer's head there are three small boxes, and my soul is hidden in them."

"But might not someone kill the deer?" asked Yelena the Beautiful.

"No, for he can only be killed with my own bow and arrows," the Tsar replied. "There is a bird in each of those boxes. If one of the birds is killed, I shall turn to stone from my feet to my knees; if the second one is killed, I shall turn to stone from my knees to my waist; and if the third one is killed, I shall die."

Morning came, the great Tsar Wind went hunting, and Yelena the Beautiful took his bow and arrows and gave them to Deer-Child, telling him how he was to go about killing him.

Deer-Child was overjoyed, and he went to the glade where the deer was browsing. He shot an arrow, killed the deer, and, running up to him, cut his head in two and took out the boxes.

Now, as soon as the deer had dropped dead, the great Tsar Wind felt that something was wrong and hurried home.

But Deer-Child wrung the first bird's neck, and the great Tsar Wind's legs turned to stone. He wrung the second bird's neck, and a numbness came over the great Tsar Wind's body so that he could barely drag himself to the threshold.

Said the great Tsar Wind to Yelena the Beautiful:

"You have betrayed me, Yelena the Beautiful!" And he made to climb the stairs, but Deer-Child seized the third bird in his hands.

"This is to pay you for the evil you have wrought!" he cried, and he wrung the third bird's neck.

The great Tsar Wind dropped dead, and Deer-Child went up to Yelena the Beautiful and told her it was time for them to leave the castle and go to join the prince.

"Very well," said Yelena the Beautiful. "But first you must pass through nine of the rooms in the castle and go into the tenth, where the great Tsar Wind's horse is tethered. It is as fast as the wind and will get us home in a trice."

Deer-Child did as Yelena the Beautiful said and found the great Tsar

Wind's horse. Then he called Babahanjomi, took the saddle out of his right ear and the bridle and whip out of his left ear, put Yelena the Beautiful on the horse's back, jumped on himself, and away they rode! They came to the castle of Yelena the Beautiful, and soon afterwards she and the prince were married, and a great feast was held in their honour.

As for the old Tsar, the prince's father and Deer-Child's foster father, he thought they were dead and spent the days weeping.

Having feasted with the bride's family, the prince, Yelena the Beautiful and Deer-Child got into the little house on Babahanjomi's back and set out for home.

On the way there they again saw the giant who had wept a river of tears out of love for Yelena the Beautiful.

"Well, giant, would you like to see Yelena the Beautiful?" Deer-Child asked.

"Ah, Deer-Child, who would let me look at her!" the giant replied.

"Well, she is here, so look if you wish," said Deer-Child.

The giant looked, and so smitten was he with Yelena the Beautiful that he dropped dead on the spot.

Deer-Child and the others rode on, and, after spending the night in the now empty house of the nine-headed giants, moved on again.

Five more months of travel still lay ahead of them when they stopped for a rest on the edge of a forest.

In the night three pigeons suddenly flew up to them and perched on the bough of a tree over their heads.

"When the old Tsar learns that his son is on his way home with Yelena the Beautiful, he will send him a gun for a gift," said one of them, "and the gun will go off and kill the prince. But whoever overhears us and speaks of it, will turn to stone and die."

"So will it be!" the other two pigeons echoed.

Said the second pigeon:

"When the old Tsar learns that his son is near, he will go out to meet him, leading a horse for him to ride on, and the horse will throw the prince and kill him."

"So will it be!" the other two pigeons echoed, adding: "But whoever overhears us and speaks of it will turn to stone and die."

Said the third pigeon:

"And when the bride and groom arrive in the Tsar's city, the terrible monster gveleshapi will come in the night and choke them both to death. But whoever overhears us and speaks of it will turn to stone and die."

And with these words they flew away.

Deer-Child heard it all, but said nothing about it to the others.

Morning came, and they all climbed into the giant's little house and set off on their way.

Learning that his son was alive and well and on his way home with Yelena the Beautiful, the old Tsar sent him a gun for a gift, but before the prince could so much as touch it, Deer-Child rushed ahead, snatched it from the bearer's hands and flung it away.

"My father the Tsar did me the honour of sending me his gun for a gift, but Deer-Child deprived me of it," said the prince to himself, sorely grieved.

They went on again, and the old Tsar sent his son a horse, but Deer-Child would not let the prince touch it and sent it back. This grieved the prince still more.

They came to the palace and were welcomed by the old Tsar who was as happy as can be. A feast was held, and Deer-Child came out of the castle and said to Babahanjomi who was waiting nearby:

"Thank you for your faithful service, Babahanjomi. You are free to go now and live where you will in peace."

The giant went away, and Deer-Child stole to the door of the bridal chamber and stood there, waiting. The bride and groom slept, but Deer-Child stayed awake, his sword at the ready, knowing that his fosterbrother's life was in his hands.

On the stroke of midnight the gveleshapi appeared. He crept up to the bridal bed, and, opening wide his jaws, was about to pounce on the bride and groom and choke them to death. But Deer-Child ran after him, killed the monster with one wave of his sword, cut up his body and threw the pieces under the bed.

Morning came, and the bride and groom rose, all unaware of what had taken place in the night.

But when the servants came to clean the bridal chamber they found pieces of carrion under the bed, and the Tsar was enraged, for he thought that someone was mocking him.

They began to talk and to reason and to ask themselves who had done it, and they put the blame on Deer-Child. For had he not shown lack of respect for the prince by throwing away the Tsar's gun and sending away his horse!

"I wished you only well," said Deer-Child.

But they were sorely vexed with him and demanded that he tell them where the carrion had come from.

"I will tell you what you wish to know," said Deer-Child, "but may

grief not weigh you down when you understand that you have caused the death of him who did all he could to make you happy. Now listen. When we camped in the field on the edge of the forest, three pigeons flew up in the night, and, perching on a bough, began to speak. The first one said: 'When the bridal train comes near, the old Tsar will send his son a gun and it will go off and kill him. But he who speaks of it will turn to stone.'"

And no sooner were the words out of his mouth than Deer-Child turned to stone from his feet to his knees.

Now they knew why it was he had not spoken before and began to plead with him to be silent, saying:

"Say no more, Deer-Child, say no more!"

But Deer-Child said:

"No, now I have begun, I must go on. So listen... The second pigeon said: 'The old Tsar will send his son a horse, and the horse will throw the prince and kill him. But whoever speaks of it will turn to stone.'"

And Deer-Child turned to stone to his waist.

"Stop! Say no more!" they begged.

"You would not believe me before, and now it is too late," said Deer-Child. "So listen. The third pigeon said: 'In the night, when the bride and groom lie asleep in their chamber, the gveleshapi will come and choke them to death—'"

But before he could say anything else, Deer-Child turned all of him to stone.

The old Tsar and the prince wept bitterly, but, of course, this did not bring Deer-Child back to life.

Yelena the Beautiful was with child, but not even this gave joy to the prince.

"I must bring my faithful friend and brother back to life at any price!" said the prince to himself.

He put on his iron greaves, took an iron staff and set out to roam the world. He wandered from place to place and he asked everyone he met if they knew how to bring his fosterbrother back to life. One day, being very weary, he sat down for a rest on the edge of a forest. By and by an old man came out of the forest, and the prince asked him what he had asked the others.

Said the old man:

"Go home, for it is there that that which will save your fosterbrother is to be found."

But because the prince did not understand what this meant the old man said again:

"Do not you know that your wife has given birth to a son? If you want your fosterbrother to live, you must sacrifice your son. Kill him as he lies in his cradle. That will bring your fosterbrother back to life."

The prince set off homewards.

"I will have other sons, but never again will I have a friend and a brother like Deer-Child," said he to himself.

He came home, and there was his son lying in the cradle. He had golden curls that sparkled and shone and his face was as bright as the moon in the sky!

The prince told Yelena the Beautiful what he had been told to do, and she agreed that it had to be done.

"Loyalty to one's friends must be put before everything else," said she.

They killed their son, and lo and behold!—Deer-Child stirred, opened his eyes and came back to life.

But Yelena the Beautiful was a mother and even though she had sacrificed her son her heart bled for him, and she came up to the cradle and stood over it weeping. All of a sudden she heard something moving in it and turned back the sheets, and there was her son, alive and well!

Everyone was overjoyed, and a feast was held to which came guests from far and near. A cow and fifteen sheep were roasted whole on spits for them to eat, and for fourteen days they feasted and drank and never even stopped to clear the tables.

THE LION AND THE HARE

A Georgian Fairy Tale



There was once a forest where many different animals liked to gather, but they were in constant fear lest the Lion come there, as he was wont to do, and eat up one or more of them.

One day they all came to the forest as usual, put their heads together and began trying to decide what to do about it. They talked and reasoned for a long time and at last decided that the best thing to do was to pay the Lion a big sum of money, to deliver it to him themselves and to ask him to leave them in peace. And this resolved on, they went to see the Lion.

The Lion heard them out and said that he did not need any money, but that he would leave them in peace if they delivered one of their own number to him daily for him to eat.

"Otherwise I will kill you all!" said he.

And so every day from that day on the animals began delivering one of their own number to the Lion for him to eat.

The days flew, and the Hare's turn came to be taken to the Lion.

"Oh, well, it's my turn and there's nothing for it," said the Hare. "Only please let me go to the Lion alone. Perhaps I shall be able to kill him and so save myself and the rest of you too."

The animals burst out laughing. What a braggart this little coward of a hare was!

In the meantime the Lion, who was very hungry, was lying in his den and gnashing his teeth as he waited for his victim's arrival and he was about to go and eat up all the animals when the Hare, who was purposely late, appeared before him.

"How dared you come so late!" said the Lion.

"I was entrusted with the task of bringing you a hare, sire," said the Hare meekly, "and I was leading him here, but another lion attacked us on the way. He seized the hare and dragged him away."

"Come, show me where he is!" the Lion roared.

The Hare led the Lion to a well.

"He is down there, sire," said he, "only I am afraid to look down at him alone. Pick me up and hold me, and I will show him to you."

The Lion picked up the Hare and looked down into the well, and there at the bottom, he saw a lion, a hare in his paws, gazing up at him.

Enraged, the Lion threw down the Hare and plunged into the well to punish his rival and take away his prey. But the well was deep, and the Lion drowned.

When the other animals heard about the Lion's death they were as happy as can be and thanked the Hare over and over again.

A LESSON IN WISDOM

A Georgian Fairy Tale



A Bear, a Wolf and a Fox once met and began bemoaning their lot and saying that they were often obliged to go hungry for so long a time that they got cramps in their bellies. Feeling that something had to be done about it, they talked it over and decided to live as brothers and to share whatever food came their way. This resolved on, they embraced in true brotherly fashion, vowed to be faithful to one another and set out together to hunt for prey.

On they walked and they came upon a young wounded deer. They killed it there and then, seated themselves in a shady spot and began dividing their booty.

Said the Bear to the Wolf whose jaws were stiff, so long had he been gnashing his teeth:

"Come, Wolf, you divide the deer among the three of us."

"Very well, if that's what you want," said the Wolf. "The head will go to you, Bear, you being our lord and master, the body to me, and the legs to the Fox."

But the Wolf had not finished speaking when the Bear struck him such a blow on the head with his paw that the mountains rang with the

sound of it. The Wolf gave a howl of pain and fell in a heap. And the Bear turned to the Fox and said:

“And now, Mistress Fox, you divide the deer.”

And the Fox, who was very sly, rose and said in flattering tones:

“The deer’s head is yours by right, Bear, for you are our lord and master, his body is yours, for you have always cared for us like a father, and his legs are yours too, for you have always tried to do all you could for the rest of us.”

“You are clever indeed, Mistress Fox,” said the Bear. “Whoever taught you this very wise and sensible way of dividing a deer?”

“You did, my lord,” said the Fox. “I’m not one to whom things have to be pointed out twice.”

ALTYN-SAKA THE GOLDEN KNUCKLEBONE

A Bashkir Fairy Tale



Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman who had only one son, Altyn-saka by name, whom everyone called Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone because he owned a golden knucklebone. Altyn-saka played knucklebones better than anyone: no one could beat him at the game.

One day the old man went to a lake to water his horses. He drove the herd close to the water, but the horses shook their manes and tails, pawed at the ground with their hoofs, whinnied nervously and kept backing away from it.

"What can it mean?" the old man asked himself. "I had better come up closer to the water and see."

But no sooner had he bent over the water than someone suddenly clutched him by the beard! The old man tried to break free, but could not.

He looked, and he saw that, clutching his beard, was the old witch Ubyr herself.

"Let me go, Ubyr!" the old man cried. "I will give you a flock of sheep if you do."

"I don't need your old sheep," Ubyr replied.

"A herd of horses, then."

"I don't need your old horses."

"What shall I give you, then?"

"Give me that of which you have but one in your yurta." *

* Yurta—tent of thick felt.—Tr.

In his fright the old man did not stop to think what it was.

"Very well, you shall have it," said he, "only let me go."

And Ubyr let him go, saying:

"Just remember that you can't hide from me, I'll find you anywhere!"

The old man came home, and it was then that he understood what it was Ubyr had asked of him. It was his son she had meant, his dear Altyn-saka, for he had but one son.

The old man felt very sad and woebegone, but he said nothing about it to his wife and son.

"We had better move on to new camping grounds, the lands here are poor," was all he said.

So they moved on to a new camping site and set up their yurta there, but the very next day Altyn-saka missed his golden knucklebone.

"Where is my golden knucklebone?" asked he.

Said the old man:

"We must have left it at our old camp. Only you mustn't go there, for Ubyr will get you."

And he told Altyn-saka of all that had happened to him on the lake shore.

"I am not afraid of Ubyr!" said Altyn-saka. "She will never catch me. I am going back, only tell me which horse I can take."

The father tried to get his son to change his mind, but Altyn-saka stood firm: he was not afraid of Ubyr, he said, go he would, and that was the end of that! There was no way of keeping him from doing what he wanted.

Said the father:

"Very well, let it be as you wish. And now go to where the herd is, swing your korok* and rattle your bridle, and whichever horse runs up to you, that is the one you must ride."

Altyn-saka went to where the herd was grazing, he swung his korok and rattled his bridle, and at once a scraggy, rough-coated colt ran up to him.

Altyn-saka drove him away and went back to his father.

"Tell me, Father, which horse should I take?" he asked.

"Did I not tell you to swing your korok and rattle your bridle?" the father said.

And Altyn-saka again went to where the herd was grazing, he swung his korok and rattled his bridle, and the very same colt ran up to him.

"There's no help for it, I'll have to take this colt," said Altyn-saka.

* *Korok*—a kind of lasso.—*Tr.*

He touched the colt's neck, and lo!—its dirty, tangled coat fell away; he put the bridle on him, and the colt became strong and sleek; he led him out of the paddock, and the colt turned into a tall and stately horse; he saddled him, and he became the best and most handsome steed in the herd.

"Where are you going, Altyn-saka?" the horse asked.

"I am going to our old camping site to get my golden knucklebone," Altyn-saka replied.

"Ubyr is waiting for you there," said the horse. "She will tell you to get off my back and pick up your knucklebone, but you must not listen to her. For if you get off my back, she will eat you up. Just bend down quickly and seize the knucklebone."

Altyn-saka jumped on the horse's back and made for the old camping site. He looked, and he saw Ubyr sitting by a campfire and warming her hands.

"Give me back my golden knucklebone, grandma," said Altyn-saka.

"There it is, lying on the ground, my son," Ubyr replied. "Get off your horse and pick it up. My back aches so that I cannot move."

But Altyn-saka did not do as Ubyr said. Instead, his horse bent low, and he snatched up his golden knucklebone without getting off his back and galloped away.

Ubyr sprang to her feet with a howl of rage. She spat once, and a great black horse stood beside her; she spat a second time, and some reins appeared. Ubyr jumped on the horse's back and galloped after Altyn-saka.

Fast as the wind they went, Altyn-saka on his bay horse and Ubyr on her great black one. Very close she got to him and was about to seize him when her horse stumbled and dropped behind.

Ubyr pulled at the reins and dug her heels into the horse's sides, but the horse only ran the slower. Ubyr flew into a passion. She was so angry that she ate up the horse and had to run on foot after Altyn-saka.

On and on Ubyr ran, goading herself on by hitting herself on the sides and back with her fists. She caught up the bay horse and bit through his right leg, but he galloped on on three legs. Ubyr did not drop behind. She caught up with the bay horse again and bit through his left leg, and the horse mustered his last remaining strength and plunged ahead, bearing Altyn-saka away from Ubyr. But he had not much strength left, and, galloping up to the side of a lake, said:

"I cannot run any more. I will hide from Ubyr in the lake, and you must hurry and climb that oak-tree yonder. When my legs heal I will carry you further."

And with these words the horse dived into the lake. Altyn-saka quickly climbed the oak-tree and hid himself in its topmost branches.

Ubyr ran up, she saw Altyn-saka in the oak-tree and cried:

"I've got you now! I will drag you down and eat you up!"

She spat, and an axe appeared. Then she pulled out a tooth, and, using it to sharpen her axe, began hacking down the oak-tree, the chips flying to all sides as she worked.

A Fox ran up at the sound.

"Why are you chopping down the oak-tree, grandma?" asked the Fox.

"Cannot you see who is sitting in it!" Ubyr returned. "I will chop down the oak-tree, seize Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone and eat him up."

The Fox looked up, and, seeing a handsome lad sitting in the top of the oak-tree, felt sorry for him.

"You are old, Ubyr!" said she. "You must not wear yourself out. Let me chop down the oak-tree for you."

"No, no," said Ubyr. "I will chop it down myself and eat up Altyn-saka."

But the Fox would not be put off so easily.

"I will chop down the oak-tree, and you will eat him up," she said.

Ubyr gave the Fox her axe, lay down under the oak-tree and at once fell asleep. She snored as she slept, and flames and smoke poured from her mouth.

While Ubyr slept, the Fox threw into the lake the axe and the tooth Ubyr had used for a whetstone, and, gathering up all the chips, fitted them into the cuts in the tree made by Ubyr. Then she spat on the cuts and licked them, and at once the chips grew fast to the tree and it became whole again.

Then the Fox said goodbye to Altyn-saka and ran away.

Ubyr woke up, took one glance at the oak-tree and said:

"What do I see! The oak is whole again as though I had never touched it."

And she began cursing the Fox and calling her all the bad names she could think of.

Then she spat, and an axe appeared, and she pulled another tooth out of her mouth and began whetting the axe. And she kept looking up at Altyn-saka as she worked and saying:

"I will chop down the oak-tree and eat you up."

When she had made her axe very sharp, Ubyr again began hacking down the oak-tree. The chips flew to all sides, and the tree shook and

swayed. Another stroke of the axe, and down it would fall!

All of a sudden a second Fox ran up.

"What are you doing, grandma?" asked she of Ubyr.

"Chopping down the oak-tree."

"Whatever for?"

"I want to get at Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone up there and eat him up."

Said the Fox:

"You must not strain yourself. Let me chop down the oak-tree for you!"

"No, no," Ubyr grumbled, "I can manage. I want to eat up Altyn-saka myself."

"And so you shall," the Fox replied. "I will only chop down the oak-tree."

"No!" Ubyr cried. "I will not give you my axe. There was another Fox here who promised to help me, but she fooled me."

"What colour was this Fox?" the Fox asked.

"Red."

"You must never trust red foxes, grandma," said the Fox. "Red foxes are liars, all of them. Only we black foxes can be trusted."

Ubyr looked at her and saw that the Fox was indeed black. So she gave her the axe and at once lay down and fell asleep. She snored as she slept, and flame and smoke poured from her mouth.

The Fox threw Ubyr's axe and tooth into the lake, fitted the chips into the cut in the tree, spat on them and licked them, and lo and behold!—they grew fast to the tree which became whole again.

Then the Fox said goodbye to Altyn-saka and ran away.

Ubyr awoke soon after and looked at the oak-tree.

"Why, what is this? The oak is whole again!" she cried.

She spat, and an axe appeared. She pulled a third tooth out of her mouth and began whetting the axe, and when it was quite sharp started chopping down the oak-tree again. And she cursed Altyn-saka and the Fox as she worked, calling them the ugliest names she could think of.

At last the oak-tree was cut halfway through, and Altyn-saka looked down and told himself that Ubyr was sure to get him now.

All of a sudden who should come running up to the oak-tree but another Fox, a white one this time.

"Let me help you chop down the oak-tree, grandma," said the Fox.

"Be off with you before I eat you up!" Ubyr cried. "Twice already have I been fooled by foxes."

"What colour were they, grandma?" asked the Fox.

"One was red and the other black," Ubyr replied.

"You must never trust red or black foxes, grandma," said the Fox. "They are terrible liars. Only we white field foxes can be trusted. I won't fool you, I promise."

Ubyr believed the Fox, and, giving her her axe, lay down and went to sleep. And the Fox threw the axe and the tooth Ubyr had used for a whetstone into the lake, and, gathering up the chips, fitted them into the cut in the tree. She spat on them and she licked them, and they grew fast to it.

Said the Fox to Altyn-saka:

"I have helped you three times, Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone, I smeared my fur with black and then with white clay so that Ubyr might not know me. But I'm afraid I can do nothing more for you."

And bidding him goodbye, she ran away.

Soon after that Ubyr woke up.

"What is this that I see!" cried she. "It is as if I had not touched the tree at all."

She spat, and an axe appeared. She pulled out her last tooth and began whetting the axe, and when it was sharp, started chopping down the oak-tree, muttering as she worked:

"No more helpers for me! I will manage by myself."

The chips flew to all sides, and the oak swayed and creaked and seemed about to crash down.

Altyn-saka sat there, and he felt that Ubyr would surely get him now.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself.

All of a sudden whom should he see come flying up to the oak-tree and perching on the top of it but a Raven.

"Hear me, Raven, hear me, my good friend!" Altyn-saka said. "You fly everywhere and know everyone. Fly to our new camp, find my two dogs Akkulak and Aktyrnak there and tell them to come quickly, for I need their help."

"I will not!" the Raven replied. "I hope Ubyr kills you, for then I shall get some of your flesh to eat."

And perching comfortably on a bough, he settled down to wait.

Altyn-saka looked to all sides to see if he could find someone to help him, and lo!—who should come flying up to the oak-tree just then but a Magpie.

"Hear me, Magpie, hear me, my good friend!" said Altyn-saka. "You fly everywhere and you know everyone. Fly to our new camp and tell my dogs Akkulak and Aktyrnak to come quickly, for I need their help."

"I will not!" the Magpie replied. "I hope Ubyr kills you, for then I shall get some of your flesh to eat."

Altyn-saka felt very sad.

"My end is near," thought he.

All of a sudden what should he see but a flock of sparrows flying just over his head.

"Hear me, grey sparrows, hear me, my good friends!" said Altyn-saka. "Fly to our new camp, find my dogs Akkulak and Aktyrnak and tell them that the old witch Ubyr wants to eat me up."

"We'll find them, we'll find them! We'll tell them, we'll tell them!" chirped the sparrows, and away they flew very fast for Altyn-saka's camp.

They came to the camp and they found Altyn-saka's two dogs fast asleep, worn out completely what with running about in search of their master. And the sparrows began to peck at the dogs' ears and set up a great chirruping.

"Come, Akkulak, come, Aktyrnak," they chirped, "hurry and run to the big oak-tree that grows by the lake and save your master. Ubyr wants to eat him up."

Akkulak and Aktyrnak started up and rushed for the lake, raising clouds of dust as they ran.

Ubyr saw the dust, and she said to Altyn-saka:

"Look, Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone, look! What are those clouds of dust on the road?"

"They bring joy to me and grief to you!" Altyn-saka replied.

Ubyr heard the patter of the dogs' feet, and she asked:

"Do you hear that, Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone? What is that patter?"

"It brings joy to me and grief to you!" Altyn-saka replied.

Just then Akkulak and Aktyrnak ran up, they rushed at Ubyr and began to bite and to worry her.

Ubyr was frightened, she threw her axe in the lake and plunged in after it.

Said the dogs to Altyn-saka:

"We are going to dive in after Ubyr, and you stay here and watch the water. If we kill Ubyr, the water in the lake will turn black; if Ubyr kills us, it will turn red."

And with these words they plunged in.

The water in the lake began seething and boiling and Altyn-saka saw that it was turning red.

"Ubyr has killed my dogs!" said he to himself.

He looked again, and lo!—the water was now black.

Altyn-saka was overjoyed. He laughed in glee and climbed down from the oak-tree, and Akkulak and Aktyrnak came out of the water and began shaking themselves.

"Why did the water in the lake turn red at first?" Altyn-saka asked.

"Because Ubyr was beginning to get the better of us and even bit off one of my ears," said Aktyrnak. "But we soon made short work of her."

The bay horse followed the dogs out of the lake.

"Come, Altyn-saka the Golden Knucklebone," said he, "jump on my back, and I will take you home."

And so Altyn-saka returned to his camp safe and sound. His mother and father were very happy, and they held a great feast to which they invited all their kith and kin, and all their friends too. For nine whole days they ate and drank and made merry!

TSARKIN KHAN AND THE ARCHER

A Kalmyk Fairy Tale



In olden times, in the realm of Tsarkin Khan there lived an Archer who was brave and handsome and strong. One day he went to the shore of a lake to hunt wild fowl, and he saw three golden-crowned swans. The Archer at once fell flat on the ground, hid himself in the rushes and lay in wait.

The three golden-crowned swans flew down to the shore, cast off their feathers and turned into three beautiful maidens who stepped into the water and began bathing.

The Archer crept near, seized the cast-off plumage of one of the swans and hid himself in the rushes again.

The swan-maidens bathed and swam about, they came out of the water, and two of them at once donned their feathers, but the third could not find hers. The two swans flew up into the air and began looking for their sister's feathers, but did not see them anywhere.

"It is the will of fate, sister!" cried they and flew away.

The swan-maiden was left alone. She ran up and down the shore, looking for her feathers and weeping bitterly.

"If he who finds my feathers and returns them to me is poor," said she, "I will make him rich. If he is ugly, I will make him handsome. I will give him anything he asks for."

The Archer came out from behind the clump of rushes.

"Do not grieve, swan-maiden, but come to me," he said. "I have your feathers."

Seeing her feathers in the hands of the handsome Archer, the swan-maiden was well pleased and came up to him shyly.

"O my brother," said she, "you have done one kind deed in finding my feathers. Now do another and let me have them back. In return, you shall have anything you desire, I will grant your every wish."

"There is nothing I want but your own dear self," replied the Archer. "Will you be my wife?"

The swan-maiden looked at the Archer, and, seeing him so young and tall and handsome, said softly:

"I will."

Then the Archer took her by the hand, led her to the nomad camp where he lived, and married her. They had only the Archer's kибитка, his covered wagon, for a home, but they loved one another dearly and could not bear to be out of each other's sight for even a moment.

Some little time passed, and Tsarkin Khan heard that his Archer was married to a woman of rare and dazzling beauty. Being curious to learn if this were true, he went to the Archer's tent and was astonished to see that those who had spoken of the Archer's wife had not exaggerated. As lovely as a daughter of the sun was she, and no woman in the realm could compare with her!

Having feasted his eyes on the swan-maiden's beauty, Tsarkin Khan returned to his palace and at once called together his darkhans, his viziers and councillors, regaled them with the best of foods and drinks, and then said:

"O my darkhans, you whom I hold as dear as life itself, I ask for your counsel."

"You shall have it, O Khan!" the darkhans replied.

Said Tsarkin Khan:

"One of my archers has a wife whose beauty is such as has never been seen on earth. She outshines all!"

And Tsarkin Khan went on to speak of the proud bearing and lovely features of the Archer's young wife, of her sweet voice and of the graceful way she walked, of the beauty of her eyes and of her long, plaited hair.

"And this woman of beauty so rare that it is as the rays of the sun is the wife of a simple archer," said he in conclusion. "Advise me. Tell me how I can get her for myself."

Some of the darkhans thought it over and said:

"Steal her from her home and keep her in the palace secretly, without anyone knowing about it."

Others of the darkhans thought it over and said:

"Kill the Archer and marry her."

Still others of the darkhans thought it over and said:

"Do not kill the Archer but banish him from your realm. Then you can take away his wife with no trouble."

When all of them had spoken, the chief darkhan, he who sat on the right-hand side of the Khan, rose to his feet.

"There is no wisdom in any of these counsels," said he. "To steal a woman from her home and keep her secretly in the Khan's palace is imprudent, for sooner or later the people will learn about it. To kill the Archer and marry his widow is dangerous, for the people may rebel, and then there will never be an end to trouble. To banish the Archer is foolish, for he will return in secret and take his wife away. No, what we must use here is cunning."

"What is it you advise, then?" Tsarkin Khan asked.

Said the chief darkhan:

"I have heard that in the land of the setting sun, on the steep bank of a wide river, there dwells a tigress and her cubs. This tigress is more savage than any beast to be found on earth. You, my Khan, must order the Archer to bring you some of the tigress's milk. He will not come back, for the tigress is sure to tear him to pieces. Then it will be easy for you to take his wife for yourself. Nor will it be hard to send the Archer on this errand, for he will not dare to disobey his Khan."

The chief darkhan's plan found favour with both Tsarkin Khan himself and all his councillors.

"That is a wise plan," said they.

And Tsarkin Khan did as the darkhan counselled. He pretended to be gravely ill and sent for the Archer.

The Archer came, and the Khan began moaning and sighing.

"You can see for yourself that I am stricken by a grave illness," said he. "The cure is to be found in the land of the setting sun. There, on the steep bank of a wide river, dwells a huge tigress. Only her milk can give me back my strength. Go at once and bring me some."

And Tsarkin Khan moaned the louder and writhed as if in pain.

The Archer went back to his khibitka and began getting ready for his journey. He put on his best clothing and he armed himself with his best weapons.

"Where are you going?" his wife asked.

"The Khan is dangerously ill. He can only be cured if he drinks of

the milk of the tigress that lives on the steep bank of a wide river in the land of the setting sun. He has ordered me to go there without delay. I go against my will, but I cannot disobey."

The Archer's wife understood that, in sending her husband for the tigress's milk, Tsarkin Khan had some evil purpose in mind. She brought out her flowered kerchief, gave it to her husband and said to him:

"Always have this kerchief with you, for it will save you from death. When the tigress makes to pounce on you, take it out and wave it, and she will at once become meek and gentle and allow you to milk her. She knows me, for she has lived in my house."

The Archer took the flowered kerchief, saddled his horse, and, taking leave of his wife, set off at a gallop for the land of the setting sun.

Lower than the clouds but higher than the tops of the nomad tents he rose, leaving behind him hills and gorges, lakes and deserts. In such haste was he to carry out the Khan's command and return to his wife that he did not stop to eat during the day or to sleep at night and forgot to count the days and nights.

He was on his way for a long time and at last reached a cliff overhanging a river as broad as the sea. It was here that the huge tigress and her cubs dwelt.

The tigress saw the Archer when he was a whole day's ride away. She let out a deafening roar, and, wanting to pounce on him, leapt forward. But the Archer, quick as lightning, pulled out the flowered kerchief his wife had given him and waved it. The tigress at once stood stock-still and stopped roaring.

"Tell me, brave Archer, where did you get the kerchief?" she asked him.

"My wife gave it to me," the Archer replied.

"And now tell me why you have come here," the tigress went on.

"My Khan has fallen dangerously ill," the Archer told her, "and he has ordered me to fetch him some of your milk."

"Dismount quickly and I will let you milk me," said the tigress. "You can fill your whole bortago* full of my milk."

The Archer alighted and milked the tigress. When his bortago was full, he strapped it tightly to his saddle, thanked the tigress and wished her good health.

"I wish you the same," the tigress said. "Go home to your wife, make your Khan well again, and may fortune smile upon you always."

* *Bortago*—a flat vessel of leather.—*Ed.*



And saying this, the tigress went back to her cubs, and the Archer jumped on his horse and set off homeward.

He had no sooner arrived than he took his bortago to the Khan.

And Tsarkin Khan took a sip of the milk and pretended that it had revived him.

"I am well again now," said he.

He sent the Archer from him and at once called together his darkhans.

"It was a wise counsel my chief darkhan gave me, but it has availed me nothing," said he. "The tigress did not tear the Archer to pieces: he has returned home safe and sound. What errand shall I send him on so that he may never come back here again?"

The darkhans began to think and to ponder, but rack their brains as they would there was nothing they could think of.

Then the chief darkhan, he who sat on the left-hand side of the Khan, rose and said:

"We sent the Archer to a place where we thought he would perish, but as he did not, there remains but one thing for us to do: to get together the worst rascals in the realm, have them fill their bellies with drink and food, and try to discover whether they know of a way of putting the Archer to death and thus ridding the Khan of him for ever."

"The chief darkhan has spoken truly, we must do as he says," they all agreed.

And Tsarkin Khan and his darkhans secretly invited to the palace a company of rogues, thieves and cutthroats of the worst kind. They filled them with drink and rich food and began trying to discover whether anyone among them knew of a way of ridding the Khan of the Archer.

"If there is no one among you who can help the Khan," said they, "perhaps you know of someone who can."

And Tsarkin Khan and his darkhans began walking about among the ill-assorted company and waiting to hear what the rogues and thieves had to say. But no reply came, for the rogues and thieves kept as mum as if they had not yet swallowed the meat they had been given. Then the darkhans put the same question again, and again the rogues and thieves were silent. Suddenly one among them, a man blind in one eye and a cunning devil if there ever was one, jumped up from his seat, threw open his robe, and, smiting his chest with his fist, cried:

"I know what to do!"

Tsarkin Khan was well pleased.

"Speak up, then!" he said.

Said the one-eyed man:

"You must send the Archer No-One-Knows-Where and command him to bring you No-One-Knows-What. He will go to seek something that is without shape or form, and, not being able to find it, will never dare to appear in these parts again."

Tsarkin Khan and his darkhans were delighted with the one-eyed man's counsel, and, rewarding him richly, sent him away.

In order to find some pretext for what he was about to ask the Archer to do, Tsarkin Khan again pretended to be gravely ill, and, summoning the Archer, said to him with many moans and sighs:

"I am gravely ill again, and I can only be cured if you go No-One-Knows-Where and bring me No-One-Knows-What. If anyone can do it, you can."

"But where am I to go and what am I to bring?" the Archer asked.

"I don't know," said Tsarkin Khan. "All I know is that you are the only one who can do it. If you fail, I shall die."

And he began moaning louder than ever and writhing as if in pain.

The Archer went back to his kibitka and began to think what he should do. For three days and three nights he thought. During the day he would climb to the top of a hill and stand there thinking, and at night he would turn and twist on his thick mat of felt. He thought long and he thought hard, but could think of nothing. Yet he would not breathe a word of it to his wife for fear of worrying her.

Three days passed, and then the Archer saddled his horse.

"Perhaps if I follow my nose I shall get wherever it is the Khan is sending me," said he to himself, and, jumping on the horse's back, he called his wife in order to bid her good-bye.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"The Khan is ill again," the Archer replied. "He has commanded me to go No-One-Knows-Where to seek No-One-Knows-What."

Said the Archer's wife:

"You won't get there on horseback, you must go on foot. Here is a ball of thread for you. Take three steps and then throw it down, and whichever way it rolls, there you must go. Here, too, is a golden comb. Take it with you and comb your hair with it every morning."

The Archer said goodbye to his wife, took three steps and threw down the ball of thread. The ball of thread started rolling very, very fast, and the Archer walked after it.

He followed it over salt marshes and quicksands, up high hills and down deep gullies, past lakes and camping grounds and through growths of rushes. During the day he would not stop to eat, at night he

would not sleep, and he lost count of the days, weeks and months that passed. At last the ball of thread rolled into a great, dark forest, and the Archer followed it. Day in and day out he walked, without rest or sleep, and the ball of thread kept rolling on and on. Finally it rolled up to a little kibitka of felt and vanished, for all the world just as if it had melted away.

"What am I to do now?" the Archer asked himself. "I suppose I must go inside."

And lifting up the hanging of thick felt, he entered the kibitka and was met by a little woman who was very, very beautiful.

"Who are you, where do you come from and where are you going?" she asked him.

"I am the Khan's Archer," the Archer replied, "and I am going No-One-Knows-Where to seek No-One-Knows-What."

The little woman asked the Archer nothing more. She put food before him and then sent him to bed, and the Archer fell asleep the moment he lay down.

In the morning he rose, washed and began combing his hair with the golden comb, and the little woman, mistress of the little kibitka, saw him and asked:

"Where did you get that golden comb?"

"My wife gave it me," the Archer replied.

The little woman was overjoyed.

"If that is so, then you are my kinsman," she said, "for your wife is my younger sister. Why did you not tell me about it yesterday?"

And placing food and drink before him, she said:

"Give your weary feet a rest after so long and hard a journey and stay with me for three more days."

The Archer gladly agreed and stayed in the little woman's kibitka for another three days.

On the third day, when the Archer had rested, the little woman said to him:

"Now tell me where you are going and why."

Said the Archer:

"My Khan is gravely ill and he has ordered me to go No-One-Knows-Where and bring him No-One-Knows-What. What that is I do not know. My wife, who is your younger sister, gave me a ball of thread and told me to follow it, and it led me to you. But where I am to go now I do not know, for the ball of thread has vanished."

At this, the little woman, mistress of the little kibitka, gave the Archer a ball of silken thread and said:

"Follow this ball of thread, and it will take you to my elder sister's house. Perhaps she can tell you where you must go."

So the Archer set off again after the ball of silken thread. Day after day he walked and night after night, and he never stopped for a rest. He left the great, dark forest behind him and walked across a steppe and after thirty days and thirty nights reached another forest, as large and dark as the first.

The ball of thread wound in and out among the trees and bushes, and the branches scratched the Archer's hands and body and struck him in the face, but he went on and on and never stopped.

Many days passed, and the ball of thread rolled up to the entrance of a tiny little kибitka of felt standing in the middle of the forest and vanished.

A tiny little woman, who was very, very beautiful, came out of the kибitka.

"Who are you, where do you come from and where are you going?" she asked.

"I am the Khan's Archer," the Archer replied, "and I am going No-One-Knows-Where to seek No-One-Knows-What."

The tiny little woman, mistress of the tiny little kибitka, asked the Archer nothing more, but invited him to come in, gave him food and drink and put him to bed.

In the morning the Archer rose, washed, and began combing his hair with the golden comb. The tiny little woman, mistress of the tiny little kибitka, saw him and asked:

"Where did you get that golden comb?"

"My wife gave it me," the Archer replied.

The tiny little woman's face brightened with pleasure.

"In that case, you are my kinsman, for your wife is my youngest sister. Why did you not tell me about it before?"

And she brought out all she had in the house, the best foods and the best drinks, and began to regale the Archer.

Said she when he had had his fill:

"You must give yourself a good, long rest. Stay with me for a time."

So the Archer spent three days and three nights in the tiny little woman's kибitka, and on the fourth day she asked him to tell her where he was going and why.

"Do not hide anything from me," she said.

The Archer told the tiny little woman all about everything, and the tiny little woman listened to his story, shook her head and said:

"I cannot help you myself, but I shall ask my helpers and perhaps they will."

And she took her golden horn, went outside and blew a loud blast.

There sounded one hundred and eight sad notes and sixty-two gay ones, and at once the wild beasts of the steppe and the forest, the birds of the sky, and the worms from under the ground gathered before the tiny little woman, mistress of the tiny little kibitka, and waited for her to speak.

Said the tiny little woman:

"Beasts and birds and worms, you who go everywhere, who know all and hear all, does anyone among you know where that is found which has no shape or form? Let him who does come forward and say 'I know,' and let him who does not, say 'I do not know,' and then all of you can go back to where you came from."

Said the birds:

"We do not know!" and at once flew away.

Said the beasts:

"We do not know!" and at once ran away.

Said the worms:

"We do not know!" and at once crawled away.

Then the tiny little woman picked up her horn and blew another blast, there sounded one hundred and eight sad notes and sixty-two gay ones, and all the creatures living in the water gathered round her: fishes and turtles and frogs and snakes and crayfish.

Said the tiny little woman, mistress of the tiny little kibitka:

"Snakes and fishes, you who go everywhere, you who know all and hear all, answer me: does anyone among you know where that is found which has no shape or form? Let him who does come forward and say 'I know,' and let him who does not, say 'I do not know,' and then all of you can go back to where you came from."

"We do not know! We do not know! We do not know!" cried the fishes, the turtles, the snakes, the frogs and the crayfish, and they went back to their lakes, rivers and swamps.

Only one large crayfish stayed where he was.

Seeing that the crayfish was undecided as to what he should do, the tiny little woman, mistress of the tiny little kibitka, said:

"You are Khan of the crayfish, are you not?"

"I am," the crayfish replied.

"What is it you know? What is it you have heard? What is it you wish to say? Be it true or false, speak just the same."

Said the crayfish:

"I am not sure that what I am about to say is true."

"That's as it may be, but say it you must just the same," the tiny little woman, mistress of the tiny little kibitka, insisted.

"Well, then," the crayfish began, "let him who seeks that which has no shape or form, travel south for a month till he reaches the sea. If he finds that he is unable to cross it, let him turn west, and after travelling for another month he will get to a ford. When he has crossed the sea and reached the opposite shore, he will come upon a wide road that leads south again. If he follows it for a month he will come to a great, dense forest with a two-wheel track running across it. Where the track ends there the way ends. What lies beyond, I do not know."

And with this the crayfish crawled away.

"Well, brave Archer, did you hear what the Khan of the crayfish said?" the tiny little woman asked.

"I did," replied the Archer.

"In that case, you can start on your way, and perhaps you will find what you are looking for. From now on you will have to fend for yourself!"

She gave the Archer food and helped him get ready, and, after taking leave of her, he set off on his journey.

On and on he walked, day after day, and he never stopped. It was not till a month had passed that he at last reached the sea. He looked at it, and, seeing that he would never be able to cross it, turned west. After walking along the shore for a month he came to the ford, crossed the sea, found the road on the opposite shore and followed it for another month. There, lying to the east of him, he saw a great, dense forest and turned toward it, but he had to walk for another three days and three nights before he finally reached it.

He entered the forest and saw the two-wheel track which he had been following winding in and out among the trees. He went on along it and after some hours came to a thicket. Here the track vanished, and the Archer began working his way through the thicket. The trees there were tall and dark and they covered the sky with their branches, so that not a ray of sun or a gleam of light came through. Seeing no path anywhere, the Archer stopped.

"What am I going to do?" he asked himself. "I have come too far to go back now."

He looked round him carefully and saw that there was a hole in the ground just in front of him. He climbed down the hole, and, finding himself in an underground passage, began groping his way along it. On and on he went until he came to a small house. He went inside and looked about him, but there was no one there. He listened, but not a sound did he hear. And yet he could see that the place was not deserted and that someone lived there.

"I don't know who lives here," said the Archer to himself, "but I must be careful."

And seeing a deep niche in the wall, he crawled into it and at once fell fast asleep.

The clatter of cart wheels woke him, and so loud was the sound that he knew the cart was no ordinary cart.

So he hid himself as best he could and lay there quiet as a mouse.

The cart came to a halt at the door of the house, and a young giant stepped inside. He was clad in rich garments, and costly weapons hung at his belt. The giant removed his weapons and hung them on the wall, and then he took off his garments and hung them on the opposite wall. After that he sat down cross-legged fashion and said:

"Come, Murza, I am hungry!"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than a flowered cloth unrolled before him, and on it appeared the finest of foods and drinks, everything, in fact, to please the palate and cheer the heart.

The giant had his fill of the food and the drink, and then he said:

"Come, Murza, take it away!"

And at once the flowered cloth with all its plates, jugs and cups vanished as if into thin air.

The giant donned his garments, took his weapons and left the house, and at once there came the rumble and clatter of cart wheels that died away in the distance: the giant had gone.

The Archer crawled out of his hiding-place and looked around him, but he saw nothing and no one. He stood there wondering and he said to himself:

"Who could the giant have been? And who was it that served him all those fine dishes? I think I shall try and do all that he did."

The Archer then removed his weapons and hung them on the hook the giant had used, he took off his garments and hung them on the second hook, and then he sat down on the felt mat and said:

"Come, Murza, I am hungry!"

At once a flowered cloth unrolled before him, laden with the choicest foods and the finest drinks.

The Archer ate and drank and then said:

"Where are you, Murza? Come, sit down and eat and drink your fill."

At this Murza appeared and at once sat down and began to eat, and when he had finished, he said:

"For thirty whole years have I served food and drink to the giant, and not once did he invite me to eat or drink with him. Not so you. I served you only once, and you thought of me and invited me to partake

of your repast. I shall be better off with you. Take me with you."

"Gladly," the Archer replied. "It must be you I came and searched for and found so unexpectedly."

"From this day on I shall be yours and will follow you everywhere," Murza declared.

They came out of the house and went along together, Murza keeping always at the Archer's side, but remaining invisible to all eyes.

Whether they were long on the way or not no one knows, but suddenly there was a loud clatter of wheels.

Said Murza to the Archer:

"That is my former master riding his eight black horses. He must be hungry and will call on me to serve him, but there will be nobody to answer his call."

They went on and late in the evening reached a lonely and desolate spot. An old kибitka stood there, its covering of felt worn and full of holes.

The Archer went inside and found there a dayanchi, a hermit, who was so absorbed in prayer that he seemed not to notice that he was no longer alone.

"O most venerable dayanchi," the Archer said, "there is something I wish to ask of you. Allow me to spend the night in your kибitka."

The dayanchi interrupted his prayers and said:

"No man has appeared in these parts before. Where do you come from and where are you going?"

"I have travelled to distant lands and now I am on my way home again," the Archer replied.

Said the dayanchi:

"You are welcome to spend the night here, but I have no food to offer you and no tea, nothing at all. I have not so much as a pot or a tripod in my kибitka."

"I do not want anything," the Archer replied. "All I need is a place to spend the night."

"Well, then, you may stay!" said the dayanchi, and, prostrating himself on the floor, began to pray again. But just before going to bed he took out some wild raspberries and dried sloes and began eating them.

"I dare not offer you such poor fare," said he to the Archer. "And there is not enough of it besides. I have little time to gather fruit, for I must devote myself to prayer."

This left the Archer unmoved.

"You eat your food," he said, "and I will eat mine." And he called loudly:

"Come, Murza, I am hungry!"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than a flowered cloth unrolled before him, set with platters of food and jugs of koumiss* with all, in short, to please the palate and cheer the heart.

The Archer seated himself before it and said to the dayanchi:

"Well, now, most venerable dayanchi, why do you not join me and try some of my food?"

The dayanchi sat down beside the Archer and began to eat and to praise what he ate. And the Archer called Murza and invited him, too, to partake of the food.

When they had all had their fill, they rose, and the Archer said:

"Take it away, Murza."

And at once all that had been on the flowered cloth, as well as the cloth itself, vanished.

The dayanchi, who was well pleased with the dainty foods he had eaten, began pleading with the Archer to trade with him.

"Do please give me this Murza of yours with his magic cloth, my brave Archer," he begged. "You shall have something very fine in return."

"Oh no," the Archer replied. "I would not trade Murza for anything. I need him myself."

But the dayanchi would not be put off and went on pleading with the Archer all night long.

"I will give you something even more wonderful than your Murza in exchange for him, Archer," said he.

"What can you give me?" the Archer asked.

"I will show you," said the dayanchi, and he took out a khadak, a long silken kerchief, and told the Archer to come outside with him. The Archer did so, and the dayanchi waved the khadak and said:

"Stand before me!"

In the same instant a magnificent palace, its roof nearly touching the sky, appeared before them. Its beauty was such as had never been seen, it was ornamented with silver and gold and studded with coral, pearls and precious stones, and it was more rich than the palaces of the richest khans.

Said the dayanchi to the Archer:

"You are young, brave Archer, and you will have need of the palace. As for me, all I want is something to please the palate. So take my khadak, my magic kerchief, and let me have Murza with his flowered cloth."

* *Koumiss*—a drink of fermented mare's milk.—*Tr.*

But plead as the dayanchi might, the Archer would not agree.

"No, no," said he, "I cannot give up my Murza."

But Murza whispered in his ear:

"Trade with him. The palace will be yours, and I will be yours, too, you will see."

And the Archer did as Murza said and agreed to trade with the dayanchi.

The dayanchi then waved his magic kerchief and said: "Vanish!" and at once the palace disappeared.

And the Archer took the kerchief from him and said:

"Now Murza is yours."

And saying goodbye to the dayanchi, he went on his way.

He reached a mountain pass, skirted it and said to himself:

"I acted rashly. I should not have made the exchange. Now I have this magnificent palace, but no Murza. Where is he and what is he doing now, I wonder?"

All of a sudden what did he hear but Murza's own voice, saying:

"Do not grieve, brave Archer, I am at your side. Never will I part with you!"

"What about the dayanchi?" the Archer asked.

"Let him pray," Murza replied. "I will not be a servant of his."

The Archer was overjoyed and went on. At times he would walk and at others he would run, so eager was he to get back home to his young and beautiful wife. On and on he went without stopping, never counting the passing days and nights, till at last he reached the sea.

"If I am to go all the way round the sea," said he to himself, "I shall have to travel for another month. But perhaps I will meet some boatmen here."

He went along the seashore and what did he see but a large ship at anchor. There were many warriors on board, and they were all waiting to sail across. The Archer came close and said:

"I come from far, far away, brave warriors. Do me a kindness, take me with you to the opposite shore."

Said the chief of the warriors:

"Very well, come on board."

The Archer boarded the ship and he and the warriors set sail together.

After a time the warriors grew hungry, and they sat down and began to eat.

Said the Archer:

"Won't you give me something to eat too?"

"A fine way to behave!" the warriors cried. "We let you on board, and now you want us to feed you into the bargain! And we each of us are allowed only so much food and no more and cannot share it with anyone."

Said the Archer:

"Your food is portioned out to you, but mine is not. If I so desire, I can feed you all, and there will still be enough left for as many more."

The warriors were stung to the quick.

"Braggart! Liar!" they cried in angry tones. And they went and told their chief about the Archer's boast.

The chief at once called the Archer and said to him:

"I hear you have been bragging that you can feed all my warriors at once?"

"I was only telling the truth," the Archer replied.

"If that is so, then do it, and we shall believe that you are a man of truth. But should your words prove false, do not expect mercy. We shall tie a stone round your neck and throw you overboard."

"Very well," said the Archer, "I will prove to you that I spoke truly! Sit down, all of you, in two rows, but mind you leave a wide passage between them."

The warriors did as the Archer asked, they seated themselves in two rows, and so many were they that the rows stretched from one end of the ship to the other.

"Come, Murza," the Archer said, "these warriors are hungry, feed them well!"

And the same instant a flowered cloth set with all kinds of foods and drinks unrolled before the warriors.

The warriors ate and drank their fill, but there still remained enough food and drink to feed as many more.

"Have you had enough?" the Archer asked.

"Yes!" the warriors cried.

"Good!" said the Archer. "Come, Murza, take it away!"

And the same instant everything vanished: the cloth and the plates, the jugs and the cups.

The warriors opened their mouths in astonishment.

"Never have we seen anything so wonderful," said they.

And they began whispering to each other and trying to think how to get Murza and his magic cloth for themselves.

"Sell him to us," said they to the Archer.

"Oh no," replied the Archer. "He is not for sale."

And no matter how hard they pleaded and how much gold they

offered, they could not persuade the Archer to do as they asked.

"If you do not want to sell him," said they, "then let us trade. We will give you something no less wonderful in return."

"What can you give me?" the Archer asked. "Nothing can be more precious to me than my Murza."

The warriors brought out a gold stick, one end of it thin and the other thick, showed it to the Archer and said:

"We will give you this stick. It is a magic stick. If you strike at the ground with the thick end, mounted warriors without count or number will appear, each of them clad in shining armour and bearing a sword of steel; and if you strike at the ground with the thin end, archers without count or number will appear, each one armed with a bow and arrow."

Seeing the magic stick, Murza moved close to the Archer.

"Trade with them, do, brave Archer," said he in a whisper. "The stick will be yours, and I will be yours too."

And the Archer did as Murza said and traded with the warriors, exchanging him for the golden stick.

Soon afterwards they reached the opposite shore and left the ship, the warriors going off in one direction and the Archer in another.

"Where can my Murza be now?" he asked himself.

But Murza did not reply and did not appear.

The Archer walked on for another day and another night and then he said again:

"Where are you, Murza, my dear friend?"

But Murza did not reply and did not appear.

The Archer went on, but when another two days and two nights had passed, he again called to his friend, saying: "Where are you, Murza? Answer me!"

But Murza did not reply and did not appear.

The Archer was overcome with grief.

"He has fooled me, after all," said he to himself. "I should never have traded with those warriors!"

The evening of the fifth day came, and the Archer said to himself:

"I think I shall call him one last time!" And he cried loudly:

"Answer me, Murza! Where are you?"

And all of a sudden what did he hear but Murza's own voice saying:

"Do not grieve, brave Archer! Your Murza is here at your side. I came at midday."

The Archer was overjoyed. He sat down on the ground and said:

"I am dying of hunger. Let us eat quickly!"

And at once the flowered cloth, set with foods of all kinds, unrolled before them. The Archer and Murza ate their fill and then went on. They walked for a long time, and the days and the nights were as one to them, but at last, on the stroke of midnight, they arrived in the realm of Tsarkin Khan.

The Archer walked into his kibitka and roused his wife.

"I have come back!" said he.

The wife was overjoyed. She rose quickly and made up the fire.

"Are you in good health, my husband?" asked she.

And they began telling each other about how they had passed the time in each other's absence.

"How is the Khan faring?" asked the Archer. "Is he still sick?"

"The Khan has been well all this time," the wife replied. "He visited me three times to try and persuade me to become his wife. But each time he did I said to him: 'It is not fit for me to think of remarrying. My husband went to seek the remedy you asked for, and, for all I know, he may be alive. How can I marry you?' But the Khan would repeat: 'No, your husband is dead. He died long ago.' So the last time he came I said to him: 'Show me my husband's bones if you want me to believe you. When I see them I will know what answer to make.' This made him very angry, and he ordered all our herds and belongings to be taken from me. Now there is nothing left to us but this kibitka."

When the Archer heard what his wife had to say he fell into a great passion.

"Let us go to the Khan!" cried he. "I will punish him for his treachery and lawless ways."

They made for the Khan's palace, and when they were a little distance away from it the Archer stopped, waved his magic kerchief and said:

"Let a palace appear on this spot!"

And at once a great palace, so tall that it reached to the clouds, and so rich and beautiful that the Khan's palace was as a hovel beside it, rose up before him.

The Archer and his wife came into the palace, and the Archer said:

"Come, Murza, we are hungry, feed us!"

Murza brought them food, and when they had eaten their fill the Archer came out of the palace and struck the ground with the thin end of his golden stick. The same instant men without count or number, armed with bows and arrows, appeared where none had been before. They placed themselves at the palace doors and awaited the Archer's command.

Said the Archer:

"Let no one in until I awake and rise from bed."

Morning came, and the Khan's servants saw a huge and magnificent palace towering beside his.

"What miracle is this?" asked they. "Has the great God Burkhan set up this palace in the night or has it been built by the devil?"

And they ran to Tsarkin Khan to tell him about it.

Tsarkin Khan came out and looked at the palace and was overcome with astonishment.

"What is this?" he asked. "Never in all my life, as far back as I can remember, have I seen or even heard of such a palace. Who has built it and who lives in it? Go and bring him to me!"

Away went the Khan's envoys to do as he bade.

They came to the Archer's palace and they asked of the two guards at the door.

"Whose palace is this? And who are you that guard it? Have you dropped from the sky or sprung up from out of the ground?"

But the two guards only frowned.

"And who are you that ask us so many questions?" they asked in menacing tones.

"We are the envoys of the mighty Tsarkin Khan. He has commanded us to pass on to him all that we learn from you."

"Tsarkin Khan?" the guards said. "We have never heard of him, nor do we desire to hear of him. We have our own Khan, and he is in his palace right now, sleeping. Be off with you while you still have your heads on your shoulders!"

The envoys were frightened. They went in great haste to Tsarkin Khan and told him of all that they had seen and heard. And Tsarkin Khan flew into a rage and began cursing them.

"I did not send you there to talk with the guards," said he. "I sent you to bring me their lord and master."

And ordering the two envoys to be severely punished, he summoned two of his best warriors, great, tall men both, and said:

"Seize the owner of that palace and drag him here to me!"

The Khan's two warriors came to the palace and tried to open the doors, but the guards thrust them aside.

"Who are you? Stand back if you value your lives!" they cried.

Said Tsarkin Khan's two warriors:

"We were not sent to speak to you. We were sent to seize the owner of this palace and to deliver him to our Khan."

And they began trying to break their way into the palace again.

But the guards seized them and began thrashing and beating them.

"That Khan of yours is nothing to us!" they cried. "We neither know nor wish to know him."

And having flogged the Khan's warriors, they drove them away.

Limping and groaning, the warriors dragged themselves into Tsarkin Khan's presence.

"The guards did not let us into the palace," they said. "We could not hold out against them."

Tsarkin Khan called his darkhans.

"Tell me what we should do," he said. "A powerful enemy has entrenched himself in that palace yonder."

"Send your host against him," said the darkhans.

And Tsarkin Khan at once ordered his host to be mustered and brought before him.

"Let every man who can so much as hold himself up on horseback come at my call!" said he.

Tsarkin Khan's captains mustered his host and brought it before him. There were thirty-three regiments in all, and they surrounded the Archer's palace and stood round it in thirty-three rows.

"Come out while the sun shines overhead and measure your strength with ours!" the heralds cried.

The Archer heard the challenge, and, opening his window, leaned out of it.

"Who are you? Why have you gathered here?" he called.

And the warriors replied:

"We are the host of the mighty Tsarkin Khan."

Said the Archer:

"I am no enemy to Tsarkin Khan, nor am I his friend. I live in my own palace and do not war with him. But if Tsarkin Khan wishes to do battle, then let him say so openly, and fight him I will!"

"I wish to do battle!" cried Tsarkin Khan.

At this the Archer came out of his palace and struck the ground with the thick end of his golden stick. The same instant so many mounted warriors appeared before him that they could neither be counted nor taken in at a glance. Every warrior was clad in shining armour and each had a sword in his hand. The warriors lifted their swords and cried:

"What is your command, Archer?"

"You are to do battle with the host of Tsarkin Khan!" the Archer said.

And the warriors moved forward and closed with the host of Tsarkin Khan.

Then the Archer struck the ground with the thin end of his golden

stick, and archers without count or number armed with bows and arrows appeared before him. They raised their bows and said:

"What is your command, Archer?"

"You are to do battle with the host of Tsarkin Khan!" the Archer said.

And the archers lined up behind the horsemen.

Tsarkin Khan's host wavered and fell back under the onslaught, and the Archer's host pressed on, smiting and slaying. The battle had begun in the morning, and by evening there was no one left to fight against. The Archer's warriors were about to seize Tsarkin Khan himself, but he leapt to the ground from his horse and ran to the Archer's palace, crying for mercy.

Said the Archer to his men:

"Do not kill him but bring him to me alive. I wish to speak to him."

The warriors seized Tsarkin Khan by his arms and legs and dragged him to the Archer, and Tsarkin Khan prostrated himself before him—in his fright he failed to recognise him—and begged him to have mercy on him and to spare his life.

The Archer burst out laughing.

"Never fear," said he, "I will not kill you. You wanted to fight, and I fought. Now I desire you to join me at table. Come, Murza, we are hungry, give us food and drink!"

At once the flowered cloth unrolled, the foods and drinks appeared, and the Archer began to regale the Khan, offering him now one dish and now another.

Said the Archer:

"I have heard that there is an archer in your realm, who is young, handsome and as strong as he is brave. Where is he? I wish to see him."

"That is not possible," Tsarkin Khan replied.

"Not possible? But why?" the Archer asked.

"Because he is dead."

"Can that be true? I have heard that he is alive and well."

"He went off No-One-Knows-Where to seek No-One-Knows-What," Tsarkin Khan explained. "And he should have been back long ago. Since he is not, he must be dead."

"But who sent him No-One-Knows-Where and why?" the Archer asked.

"No one did. He went off of his own free will, why I do not know," replied Tsarkin Khan.

At this the Archer became very angry.

"I said that I would spare your life, but so shameless a liar deserves to

die," said he. "It was you who sent away the Archer. And all because you wanted to take his wife from him. At first you pretended to be ill and told him to bring you the milk of a tigress. And when he did, you sent him No-One-Knows-Where to seek No-One-Knows-What. Look at me closely, and if you are not completely blinded by fear, you will see that I am that very archer... I was far, far away, No-One-Knows-Where, and have brought back with me that which has no shape and no form. I am alive and well. You did not succeed in your evil design. In all justice, I ought to kill you."

Tsarkin Khan shook with fear and fell at the Archer's feet; he crawled on his knees before him and besought him to spare his life.

The Archer thrust the Khan aside with his foot and said:

"You have done much evil, but I will not kill you. Yet will I not tolerate your presence here. Be off with you at once and keep far away from this realm, so that no one here will ever see you more."

"I thank you for this favour," said Tsarkin Khan, and, taking his family with him, left never to return.

As for the brave Archer, he and his young wife made their home in the selfsame camp, and they lived happily ever after.

A MOUNTAIN OF GEMS

A Turkmen Fairy Tale



In a certain village there once lived an old widow who had one son, Mirali by name. The mother and son were very poor. The old woman combed wool and took in washing and in this way managed to earn enough to feed herself and her son.

When Mirali grew up, his mother said to him:

"I haven't the strength to work any more, my son. You must find yourself work of some kind to do and so earn your keep."

"Very well," said Mirali, and off he went in search of work. He went here, and he went there, but nowhere could he find anything to do.

After a time he came to the house of a certain bai.*

"Do you need a workman, bai?" Mirali asked.

"I do," the bai replied.

And he hired Mirali on the spot.

A day passed, and the bai did not ask his new workman to do anything at all. Another day passed, and the bai gave him no orders of any kind. A third day passed, and the bai seemed not so much as to notice him.

* *Bai*—a rich, sometimes titled man in old Turkmenia.—Tr.

All this seemed very strange to Mirali who began to wonder why the bai had hired him.

So he went to him and asked:

"Shall I be getting any work to do, master?"

"Yes, yes," the bai replied, "I am going on a journey tomorrow, and you will come with me."

The following day the bai ordered Mirali to slaughter a bull and to skin it, and, this done, to bring four large sacks and prepare two camels for a journey.

The bull's hide and the sacks were put on one of the camels, the bai mounted the other, and off they started on their way.

They got to the foot of a distant mountain, and the bai stopped the camels and ordered Mirali to take down the sacks and the bull's hide. Mirali did so, and the bai then told him to turn the bull's hide inside out and lie down on it. Mirali could not understand the reason for this, but he dared not disobey and did as his master told him.

The bai rolled up the hide with Mirali inside it into a bundle, strapped it tight and hid himself behind a rock.

By and by two large birds of prey flew up, seized the hide which had a fresh smell of meat about it in their beaks and carried it off with them to the top of a tall mountain.

The birds began to peck and claw at the hide, and, seeing Mirali, were frightened and flew away.

Mirali got to his feet and began looking about him.

The bai saw him from below and shouted:

"What are you standing there for? Throw down to me the coloured stones that are lying at your feet!"

Mirali looked down at the ground and saw that a great number of precious stones, diamonds and rubies and sapphires and emeralds, were strewn all over it. The gems were large and beautiful and they sparkled in the sun.

Mirali began gathering the gems and throwing them down to the bai, who picked them up as fast as they fell and filled two of the sacks with them.

Mirali kept on working until a thought struck him that turned his blood cold.

"How shall I get down from here, master?" he called to the bai.

"Throw down more of the stones," the bai called back. "I will tell you how to get down from the mountain afterwards."

Mirali believed him and went on throwing down the gems.

When the sacks were full, the bai hoisted them on to the camels' backs.

"Ho there, my son!" called he with a laugh to Mirali. "Now you can see what kind of work I give my workmen to do. See how many of them are up there, on the mountain!"

And with these words the bai rode away.

Mirali was left on the mountain top all alone. He began looking for a way to climb down, but the mountain was very steep, with precipices on all sides, and he could not find one. Men's bones lay about everywhere. They were the bones of those who, like Mirali, had been the bai's workmen.

Mirali was terrified.

Suddenly there came a rush of wings overhead, and before he could turn round, a huge eagle had pounced upon him. He was about to tear Mirali to pieces, but Mirali did not lose his presence of mind, and, grasping the eagle's legs with both hands, held them in a tight grip. The eagle let out a cry, rose up into the air and flew round and round, trying to shake off Mirali. At last, exhausted, he dropped to the ground well below the mountain top, and when Mirali loosed his hold, flew away.

Thus was Mirali saved from a terrible death. He reached the foot of the mountain, and, going to the marketplace, began looking for work again. Suddenly he saw the bai, his former master, coming toward him.

"Do you need a workman, bai?" Mirali asked him.

Now, it did not enter the bai's head that any workman of his, once he had been left on the mountain top, could have remained alive—it had never happened before—and, not recognising Mirali, he hired him and took him home with him.

Soon after, the bai ordered Mirali to slaughter a bull and skin it, and this being done, told him to get ready two camels and bring four sacks.

They made their way to the foot of the same mountain, and, just as before, the bai told Mirali to lie down on the bull's hide and wrap himself up in it.

"Show me how it's done, for it's not quite clear to me," said Mirali.

"What is there to understand? Here is the way it's done," the bai replied, and he stretched himself out on the hide which had been turned inside out.

Mirali at once rolled up the hide, with the bai inside it, into a bundle and strapped it tight.

"What have you done to me, my son!" the bai cried.

The same moment two birds of prey flew up, seized the bull's hide

with the bai in it and flew off with it to the mountain top. Once there, they began to tear at it with their beaks and claws, but, seeing the bai, were frightened and flew away. The bai scrambled to his feet.

"Come, bai, do not waste time, throw down the gems to me, just as I did to you," Mirali called from below.

Only then did the bai recognise him and begin trembling with fear and rage.

"How did you get down the mountain?" he called to Mirali.

"Throw down more of the gems, and when I have enough, I'll tell you how!" Mirali called back.

The bai began throwing down the gems, and Mirali picked them up as fast as they fell. When the sacks were full, he hoisted them on to the camels' backs.

"Come, bai, look around you," he called to him. "The bones of your workmen are strewn about everywhere. Why do you not ask them how to get down from the mountain? As for me, I am going home."

And turning the camels round, Mirali set off for his mother's house.

The bai rushed about on the mountain top, shouting threats and pleas, but all in vain, for who was there to hear him!

THE CLEVER BROTHERS

An Uzbek Fairy Tale



There once lived a poor man who had three sons.

"My children! We have no herds and no gold, we have nothing," he would say to them. "Therefore you must try to amass treasures of another kind: you must learn to observe and to understand what goes on around you. Let nothing escape your notice. Instead of large herds you will have keen minds, and instead of gold, quick wits. With riches such as these you will be no worse off than those whose pockets are much better lined than yours."

A long time passed and a short, and the old man died. The brothers got together, talked things over and then said: "There is nothing for us to do here. Let us travel and see the world. If need be, we can always hire ourselves out as shepherds or farm hands. We won't starve no matter where we are."

So they got ready and set off on their way.

They crossed lonely valleys and climbed tall mountains, and they walked for forty long days.

They had now eaten all they had with them and were tired and footsore, and still the end of the road was not in sight.

At last, walls and rooftops loomed ahead—a large town lay before them.

The brothers were overjoyed and walked faster.

"The worst things lie behind and the best ahead of us," said they.

They were nearing the town when the eldest brother suddenly stopped, looked at the ground and said:

"A large camel passed here a short time ago."

They walked on a little way, and the middle brother stopped, and, looking at both sides of the road, said:

"The camel was blind in one eye."

They walked on further still, and the younger brother said:

"A woman and a little child were riding the camel."

"True," said the two elder brothers, and the three moved on again.

After a time they were overtaken by a man on horseback.

"Aren't you looking for something you have lost, horseman?" the eldest of the brothers asked him.

The horseman reined in his horse.

"Yes, I am," he replied.

"Is it a camel you have lost?" the eldest brother asked.

"Yes, it is."

"A large camel?"

"Yes."

"And blind in the left eye?" put in the middle brother.

"Yes."

"And was not a woman with a little child riding it?" the youngest brother asked.

The horseman looked at the brothers suspiciously.

"Ah, so it's you that have my camel!" he said. "Tell me what you have done with it."

"We have never seen your camel," the brothers replied.

"How do you know so much about it, then?"

"We know how to use our eyes and to put two and two together," the brothers replied. "Make haste and ride straight ahead, and you will find your camel."

"I will not!" said the man. "You have my camel and must give it back to me."

"We told you, we haven't so much as laid eyes on it!" the brothers exclaimed.

But the man would not listen to them. He pulled out his sword, and, brandishing it wildly, ordered the brothers to walk ahead of him. In this way he marched them straight to the palace of the Padishah, the ruler of the land. He put the brothers in the charge of guards and himself went straight to the Padishah.

"I was driving my herds to the mountains, and my wife and little son followed me on a large camel which is blind in one eye," said he. "They

dropped behind somehow, missed the road and lost their way. I went to look for them and overtook three men who were travelling on foot. I am convinced that these men stole my camel, and I greatly fear that they have killed my wife and son."

"What makes you think so?" asked the Padishah when the man had finished speaking.

"Well, these men told me, without my saying a word about it, that the camel was large and blind in one eye and that a woman and a child were riding it."

The Padishah thought this over.

"If, as you say, you told them nothing and yet they were able to describe your camel so well, then they must indeed have stolen it," said he. "Go bring the thieves here."

The owner of the camel went out and presently returned with the three brothers.

"Answer me, thieves!" cried the Padishah in threatening tones. "Answer me! What have you done with this man's camel?"

"We are not thieves and have never seen his camel," the brothers replied.

Said the Padishah:

"You described his camel to him without his telling you anything about it. How dare you deny you stole it!"

"There is nothing surprising about that, O Padishah!" the brothers replied. "We learnt to observe and to let nothing escape our notice from our earliest years. That is why we could tell what the camel was like without ever having seen it."

The Padishah laughed.

"Is it possible to know so much about something one has never seen?" he asked.

"It is," the brothers replied.

"Well, well, we shall see if you are telling the truth."

And the Padishah called his vizier and whispered something in his ear.

The vizier at once left the palace, but was soon back again with two servants bearing a barrow with a large chest on it.

Putting down the barrow where the Padishah could see it, they moved aside. The brothers stood watching them from a distance. They took careful note of the manner in which the chest had been carried and the way it was set down on the floor, and they noticed too that the vizier and the servants had come from the direction of the palace garden.

"Come, thieves, tell us what is in that chest!" the Padishah demanded.

"We have already told you, O Padishah, that we are not thieves," said the eldest brother. "But I can tell you what is in that chest, if you wish. The chest contains a small round object."

"A pomegranate," the middle brother put in.

"Yes, and it is not quite ripe," the youngest brother added.

Hearing them, the Padishah ordered the chest to be brought nearer and commanded the servants to open it. What was his surprise when he saw that there was nothing in it but an unripe pomegranate! The Padishah took out the pomegranate and showed it to all who were present. Then, turning to the owner of the lost camel, he said:

"These men have proved that they are not thieves. Go and look for your camel elsewhere."

All who were with the Padishah marvelled at the brothers' cleverness, but none more than the Padishah himself. He commanded delicacies of all kinds to be brought in and began regaling the brothers.

"You are blameless and free to go where you will," said he. "But first you must tell me how you knew that the man had lost a camel and what the camel looked like."

Said the eldest brother:

"The large tracks it left in the dust told me that a very big camel had passed there. When I saw that the man who overtook us on the road kept looking to all sides of him, I knew at once what he was searching for."

"Well done!" said the Padishah. "Now, which of you told the man that the camel was blind in its left eye?"

The middle brother rose to his feet.

"I did," said he.

"How did you know that the camel was blind in its left eye? Blindness does not leave tracks on the road."

"I gathered it was so because the grass had all been nibbled on the right side of the road but untouched on the left side," the middle brother replied.

"Good for you!" said the Padishah. "And which of you guessed that a woman and a child were riding the camel?"

"I did," the youngest brother replied. "I observed a spot where the camel had got down on its knees, and I saw the mark of a woman's boots on the sand close by. Other, smaller tracks told me that the woman had a child with her."

"Good! You have explained everything to my satisfaction," said the Padishah. "But how were you able to tell that the chest contained one unripe pomegranate? That is something I cannot for the life of me understand."

Said the eldest brother:

"It was evident from the way the two servants carried the barrow with the chest on it that it was not at all heavy. And as they set the barrow down on the floor I heard a clattering sound inside the chest as of some round object, not very large, rolling from one end of the chest to the other."

Said the middle brother:

"And I surmised that since the chest had been brought in from the garden and contained a small round object, that object must be a pomegranate. For there are many pomegranate trees growing by your palace."

"Well done!" said the Padishah, and he turned to the youngest brother.

"How could you tell that the pomegranate was not ripe?" he asked him.

"Now is the time of year when pomegranates are still green," the youngest brother replied. "You can see that for yourself."

And he pointed to the window.

The Padishah looked out of it and saw that the pomegranates in his garden were indeed green.

"You may not be rich in money and goods, but you are rich in wisdom!" said he to the brothers.

THE GREEDY KAZI*

A Tajik Fairy Tale



Believe it or not, but there once lived a poor man who worked very, very hard yet remained just as poor as ever he was. So he decided to leave his native parts and go to a distant city to earn his living. He said goodbye to his family and set off from home.

Whether he was long on the way or not no one knows, but at last he reached the city he was bound for and at once began going from house to house, looking for work. And he did anything that came his way, never refusing any kind of work, however hard, setting about it willingly and always doing everything thoroughly and well.

As for the money he earned, he spent only as much as he needed to buy food for himself and put away the rest in a small bag, saying to himself:

"I will work a little more, save up more money and then go back to my family."

* *Kazi*—judge.— *Tr.*

In this way he toiled unsparingly for several years and was able to put aside a whole thousand tanga. And since that, for a poor man, is a large sum of money, he began brooding about it and said to himself:

"What if through some mischance my money is lost?... To carry it on me is folly, for I may lose it; also, a thief might learn about it and might then kill and rob me. Nor will it do to hide the money at my lodgings, for someone might see me hiding it, and there being many sly and evil people in the world, I will be deprived of it and return home empty-handed."

So his thoughts ran and he did not know what to do. But at last he decided to give his thousand tanga to the kazi for safekeeping.

"Everyone says the kazi is as honest as he is pious," said he to himself, "so my money will be safe with him. I will take it back from him when I decide to go home."

And off he went to see the kazi. The kazi greeted him politely and asked what he wanted.

"I should like to leave my money with you for safekeeping, O most honourable kazi," the man said. "Please keep it for me while I am living and working in this town."

The kazi took the bag of money and said gravely:

"I shall do as you ask with the greatest pleasure. You could not have found a safer place to keep your money."

The poor man left, and the kazi counted the money and put it away in a large chest.

Some time passed, and the owner of the money prepared to go back to his family. He came to the kazi and said to him:

"Give me back my money, O most honourable kazi, for tomorrow I leave this town."

The kazi looked at him.

"What money do you mean?" he asked.

"The thousand tanga that I gave you to keep for me, most honourable kazi."

"You must be mad!" the kazi shouted. "When did you ever give me any money? One thousand tanga indeed! What an idea! Why, neither you nor any of your kin ever laid eyes on so much as a hundred tanga! Where would you get a whole thousand?"

The poor man tried to remind the kazi when it was he had brought him the money and what had been said between them. But the kazi would not listen to him. He stamped his feet and called for his servants.

"This man is a swindler!" he shouted. "Thrash him soundly and turn him out of my house!"

The kazi's servants fell on the poor man, beat him up and threw him out of the house.

The poor man stumbled off down the street with tears and lamentations.

"All my hard work has been in vain! My money is lost!" he kept repeating sorrowfully. "The kazi has taken it all!"

Now, a woman who happened to be passing by just then overheard the poor man's lamentations and said to him reproachfully:

"What has happened, my brother? Why are you, a grown-up man, crying like a child?"

Said the poor man sadly:

"O my sister, if only you knew how I have been tricked you would not reproach me! By working beyond my strength for years and never eating my fill I succeeded in putting aside a thousand tanga. Now I have lost them."

"Tell me how it happened," the woman said.

The poor man told her the whole story.

"And people say that the kazi is as honest as he is pious!" he added bitterly.

The woman listened to his story with sympathy.

"Do not be sad, not all is lost," said she. "Come with me, I will think of something."

They went to her house, and the woman took a large box that stood there and said to her little son:

"I am going with this man to see the kazi. Follow us at a distance and try not to be seen by anyone. When we reach the kazi's house, hide yourself and wait till the kazi has handed this man his money. When you see him stretch out his hands to take this box, run into the house and say: 'Father has come back with his camels and goods.'"

"Very well, I will do as you say," said the boy.

The woman placed the box on her head, and she and the poor man made their way to the kazi's house, the woman's son following them at a distance.

They came there, and the woman said to the poor man:

"I will go in first, and you come in after me."

She stepped into the house, and the kazi looked at her and at the large box on her head and said:

"What business brings you here, my sister?"

Said the woman:

"Perhaps you have heard of me, O most honourable kazi. I am the wife of Rahim, the rich merchant. My husband has taken his caravan to

distant lands, and no one knows when he will return. For many nights now I have been unable to sleep peacefully. Thieves are prowling round our house, and I am sure they plan to rob us. This box contains all the money we have, as well as all our gold and precious stones. It was with difficulty that I carried it here, it is so heavy. I should like to leave it with you for safekeeping. When my husband returns he will come for it himself."

The kazi lifted the box and his hands shook.

"There must be at least forty or fifty thousand tanga in money in this box, and many precious stones besides, it is so heavy," thought he. "I have heard this Rahim is a very rich merchant." And turning to the woman, he said:

"Very well, my sister, I shall keep your treasures for you. They will be safe with me, you may be sure. And you will get everything back, to the last tanga."

But the woman took the box from the kazi's hands.

"Will I truly get all of it back?" said she.

"Do not doubt it, my sister!" the kazi exclaimed. "All the people in the town know me for an honest man."

Just as he said this, the poor man, for so it had been agreed between him and the woman, came into the kazi's house. The kazi saw him and was overjoyed.

"Heaven itself has brought this man here," said he to himself. "There could be no better opportunity of proving my honesty to this woman. I shall give back to that beggar his thousand tanga and get a box full of money and jewels instead. It will be worth it, ha-ha!"

And the kazi turned to the woman, saying:

"I repeat to you, my sister, that there is no better place for you to leave your money than my house. Your box will be far safer here than if you keep it in your own house. And you can have it back any time you want."

The kazi's servants and all who were present in the house nodded their heads as if to say that the kazi was indeed speaking the truth and that his every word could be trusted.

And the kazi, pretending to have only just noticed the poor man's presence, exclaimed:

"Why, here is the man who gave me all his savings, one thousand tanga, to keep! He came to me this morning and asked for his money, but I did not recognise him, I mistook him for a thief and refused to give it back. If someone here knows him and will vouch for him I will give it him at once."

Said the woman:

"O most honourable kazi, I have known this poor man for almost two years. He came to this town from afar and he has been working very hard ever since. He worked for me, too, for a time. Believe me when I tell you that he has more than earned his money, for never was there a more hard-working man."

"What, you know this man!" the kazi exclaimed. "Then we need not delay. Come up here, my brother, and take your thousand tanga."

And the kazi reached into his chest, counted out a thousand tanga and gave them to their owner.

"Well, my sister, now you have seen for yourself how safe other people's money is with me and that I can be trusted to return it to its owner," said the kazi hurriedly. "Leave your box here and go home in peace."

And he stretched out his hands for the box.

But before the woman could hand it to him, her son burst into the house.

"Mother! Mother!" he called. "Come home quickly! Father has come back with his camels and goods and is waiting for you."

"Oh well, now that my husband has returned, I need no longer fear thieves," said the woman with a smile. "He will be able to look after our treasures without the help of the honourable kazi."

And with these words the woman took her box, placed it on her head and left the kazi's house in the company of the poor man.

"One must never despair, my brother," said she. "Remember that there is no knave alive whose scurvy tricks work every time. Go back to your family and live in peace. You have wandered in alien parts long enough. Spend your hard-earned money and enjoy it."

And taking leave of one another, they parted.

As for the kazi, now that he was left alone, he flew into a terrible rage. He tugged at his beard, stamped his feet and was so distressed that he did not know what to do with himself.

"Unhappy man that I am!" he said over and over again. "What a terrible misfortune! May the merchant Rahim be cursed! Why couldn't he have arrived an hour later! It would all have been over and done with by then, the box of treasures would have been mine. My riches would have multiplied. My large chest would have been filled to the top. I shall never get over it, never!"

And he wept and cried and could not stop.

BOROLDOI-MERGEN AND HIS BRAVE SON

A Fairy Tale of the Altai



Long, long ago there lived in the Altai mountains a man-eating ogre named Almys.

Almys had long black whiskers which he wore thrown over his shoulders like reins, and a beard that reached down to his knees, his eyes were bloodshot, his teeth were large and sharp, he had sharp claws instead of nails on his fingers, and his whole body was covered with thick hair.

Almys was known for his cruelty. He attacked men and women, and he spared neither old people nor little children. He would pounce on his victims and eat them up.

So strong and so cunning was Almys that no one dared to go against him. Seeing him, the people ran away and tried to hide. They did not know what else to do.

"Almys is stronger and more cunning than we," said they. "No one can outwit or get the better of him. We must learn to endure and keep silent."

And so they endured and kept silent.

Now, in one of the villages there lived a hunter, Boroldoi-Mergen by name, who was as strong as he was brave and wise. Some people might go out hunting and return empty-handed, but not so Boroldoi-Mergen. He would always come back with a full bag, bringing foxes and sables and ermines and squirrels, and he never came to harm.

One day Almys came down from the mountains to Boroldoi-Mergen's village. The people were terrified and began rushing about, not knowing where to hide. And Almys caught one of the children and went back to his lair.

While he was near, the villagers dared not speak except in whispers. But when he had gone they began weeping loudly.

"Whose child will the ogre carry off next?" the mothers called out, sobbing, while the children whimpered and the men frowned and were silent.

Of them all Boroldoi-Mergen alone was not frightened.

"It is useless to shed tears or to try to hide," said he. "We must kill Almys, only then will we live without fear."

But this did not convince the others.

"How can we kill him?" said they. "We are not birds to soar up to the sky, nor are we fish to hide in the water. Almys is sure to get the better of us all."

Boroldoi-Mergen felt sick at heart. He looked at his son, and he said to himself:

"My son did not come into this world in order that Almys might tear him to pieces with his sharp teeth. Nor was it for that that all the other children were born. Almys must be killed!"

But he did not know how this was to be done.

To challenge Almys to battle was out of the question: Almys was strong enough to destroy them all, and the villagers stood in fear of him and would refuse to fight him. To outwit Almys, too, seemed impossible, for he was always on his guard and quick to see if anything was amiss.

Boroldoi-Mergen gave himself no peace for thinking about how to rid the people of Almys. He thought and he thought, he thought for a long, long time, and at last he knew what to do.

But he told no one what that was.

He took his strongest bow and his sharpest arrows and called his son to his side.

"Is there courage in your heart?" he asked him.

"Yes, there is!" the boy replied.

"And is there pity for the people in your heart?"

"There is!"

"Then come with me. Our way will be long and our errand fearful, but go we must. Is there anything you wish to ask me?"

But the boy shook his head, and the two of them set off from home and made for the mountains which were known to be the haunt of Almys.

They climbed rocky slopes, passed through a dense forest, without so much as a footpath to guide them, and reached an open glade. There was a large tree stump there and some bushes and trees, but not a beast nor a bird was anywhere in sight.

Boroldoi-Mergen stopped, took off his hunting garb and hung it on the tree stump to make it look like a man, and his son watched in silence. He made up a fire near the stump, and still the boy watched and said nothing.

Said Boroldoi-Mergen:

"Sit here by the fire and no matter what happens do not run away."

"I won't."

"That which you will see will strike terror into you."

"It won't."

"Well, then, sit down and wait."

The boy sat down by the fire, and the father took his bow and arrows and hid himself in the bushes. Except for the two of them, there was no one about, and all was quiet and still.

A long time passed.

Suddenly there came a crackle of branches and a snapping of twigs, and Almys himself stepped out from behind the trees. When he saw the boy sitting by the fire, he gnashed his teeth and rubbed his hands in glee.

"I was on my way to the village for meat, and here is the meat waiting for me!" he roared.

Then he glanced at the tree stump, and, taking it for a hunter, said with a laugh:

"Well, hunter, watch me eat up your son! You won't dare to defend him."

And with these words, he rushed, his beard streaming in the wind, to where the boy was sitting. He tried to seize him, but the boy ran behind the stump; he ran after him, but the boy kept running round and round the stump, and he could not catch him.

Now Boroldoi-Mergen took aim, he shot an arrow and it hit Almys in the chest. Almys roared out in pain, and so loud were his cries that the trees bent from the sound of them and the rocks went crashing down the mountain.

And Boroldoi-Mergen did not stop but kept shooting one arrow after another at the ogre.

Almys flew into a rage. He rushed at the tree stump and began trying to bite through it, but could not, and, pierced by Boroldoi-Mergen's arrows, crashed to the ground. Boroldoi-Mergen went up to him and saw that he was dead.

"Come!" said Boroldoi-Mergen to his son.

And the two of them set off for their village.

They reached it soon enough, and Boroldoi-Mergen said to the people:

"Almys is dead. Now our children will grow up in peace and their mothers will live without fear."

"Who killed him?" the people asked.

"I did."

"Why did you take your son with you?"

"For him to serve as bait for Almys."

"Was he not in danger of being torn to bits?"

"He was."

And without another word Boroldoi-Mergen turned away and went into his house.

And from that day the people of the Altai Mountains were rid of their enemy Almys and lived in peace.

WHICH WAS THE BIGGEST?

A Kirghiz Fairy Tale

Long, long ago in a certain village there lived three brothers who had nothing but one piebald bull between them.

One day the brothers decided to separate and live apart. But how was one bull to be divided among the three of them? At first they thought of selling him, but found no one in the neighbourhood rich enough to buy him. Then they thought of slaughtering him and dividing the meat, but this they could not do, for they were sorry for him.

And so they decided to go to a wise man that he might settle the matter for them.

"As the wise man says, so will we do," they said, and they set off with the bull for the wise man's village. The eldest brother walked by the bull's head, the middle brother by the bull's side, and the youngest brother came behind the bull and drove him on with a stick.

At dawn they were overtaken by a man on horseback who greeted the youngest brother and asked him where he was driving the bull. The youngest brother told him all about everything.

"We are taking the bull to a wise man who is going to settle the matter once and for all," he said.

And he added, as he bade the horseman goodbye:



"You will soon overtake my middle brother. He is walking by the bull's side. Give him my regards and tell him to urge on the bull. We want to get to the wise man's village before nightfall."

"Very well," said the horseman, and, putting his horse into a trot, he rode away.

At noon he caught up with the middle brother who was walking by the bull's side.

"Your younger brother sends you his best regards and asks you to urge on the bull if you want to get to where you are going before dark," said he.

The middle brother thanked the horseman.

"When you ride up to the bull's head," he said, "give my regards to my elder brother and ask him to urge on the bull. We want to reach the wise man's village as soon as we can."

The horseman rode on, and it was evening by the time he reached the bull's head and passed on to the eldest brother what his middle brother had said.

"There is nothing I can do," said the eldest brother. "It is already dusk. We'll have to stop and spend the night by the wayside."

And he slowed his steps.

But the horseman did not stop and rode on.

The brothers spent the night in the steppe, and on the following morning started out again with the bull. All of a sudden the most terrible thing happened. A huge eagle swooped down from the sky, seized the bull in its claws, lifted him up to the clouds and flew away.

The brothers grieved and sorrowed for a time, and then went back home, empty-handed.

The eagle flew on with the bull in its claws. Soon it spied below a flock of goats and among them one which had the longest of long horns. The eagle dropped down, perched on the goat's horns and began pecking and tearing the bull and strewing his bones all around.

All of a sudden it began to rain, and the goatherd and his flock of goats took shelter underneath the selfsame goat's beard.

Suddenly the goatherd felt a sharp pain in his left eye.

"A mote must have got into my eye," he thought.

Towards evening, as he drove his flock to the village, the pain grew worse.

"Call forty doctors, good folk!" he cried. "Let them sail in my eye in forty boats and find the mote. Not a moment of peace does it give me."

And the villagers went and found forty doctors.

"Get into your boats and sail in the eye of our goatherd, doctors,"

said they. "Find the mote and put an end to his pain. Only see that you don't injure the eye."

The forty doctors set sail in the goatherd's eye in their forty boats, and they found the mote which was not a mote at all but the bull's bladebone which had got into the goatherd's eye while he was sheltering from the rain under the goat's beard.

After that the goatherd's eye stopped hurting him, the doctors all went home, and the bull's bladebone was taken far beyond the village and thrown away.

Now, soon after this, some nomads happened to be passing the place where the bladebone lay. Night was approaching, and they spoke among themselves and decided to stop and build a fire there.

"This salt marsh is the best and safest place we can find to spend the night," said they.

But when they were all settled and about to go to sleep, the ground beneath their feet began trembling and quaking. The nomads were frightened, and, piling their belongings on to their carts, moved off in haste.

Only when morning came did they recover from their fright and set up camp. And they sent forty horsemen back to the place where the earthquake had been to find out what it was that had caused it.

The forty horsemen were soon there, and they saw that what they had taken for a salt marsh was really a huge bone—the bladebone of a bull—at which a fox was gnawing even as they watched.

"So that is what made the earth tremble!" the horsemen cried. And taking aim, they let fly their arrows and killed the fox.

After that they set to work and began skinning it. But they only succeeded in skinning one side of it, for, hard as they tried, they could not turn the fox over.

They returned to their camp and told the elders all about it, and the elders began thinking what to do.

Just then a young woman came up to them.

"Do please give me the piece of foxskin your horsemen have brought, for I want to make a cap for my newborn baby," she said.

The elders gave it to her, and the woman measured her baby's head and began cutting a cap for him out of the foxskin. But she soon saw that there was only enough fur to make half a cap. So she went to the elders again and asked them to give her the second half of the foxskin.

The elders called the forty horsemen, and the forty horsemen confessed that they had not been able to turn the fox over and skin its other side.

"If one half of the foxskin is too small for you to make your baby a cap out of it," said they to the woman, "then you had better go and skin the fox's other side yourself."

The woman took her baby and went to where they had left the fox. She turned the fox over easily, skinned its other side and made her baby a cap from the two halves of the skin.

Now, here is a question for you. Which, do you think, was the biggest—

Was it the bull?

Don't forget it took a man on horseback a whole day to ride from its tail to its head.

Was it the eagle?

Don't forget that it carried the bull with it to the sky.

Was it the goat?

Don't forget that it was on its horns that the eagle perched and pecked at the bull.

Was it the goatherd?

Don't forget that forty doctors sailed in his eye in forty boats.

Was it the fox?

Don't forget that it started an earthquake by gnawing at the bull's bladebone.

Was it the baby?

Don't forget that it was as much as its mother could do to make it a cap from the whole of the fox's skin.

Or was it the woman who had such a giant of a baby?

Think hard now, and perhaps you will know the answer.

ALDAR-KOSE AND SHIGAI-BAI

A Kazakh Fairy Tale



In olden times there lived in the steppe a poor man named Aldar-Kose. He had nothing to his name but one horse, but he was very clever and always had a whole store of tricks up his sleeve.

Now, in the very same steppe there also lived a rich man by the name of Shigai-bai. Shigai-bai was very stingy. In fact, he was even more stingy than he was wealthy. Such was his niggardliness that he would not offer a guest so much as a slice of bread or a drink of water.

One day Aldar-Kose, who wanted to teach Shigai-bai a lesson, got on his horse and went to pay him a visit. When his friends and neighbours learned where Aldar-Kose was going, they burst out laughing.

"Just you wait, Aldar-Kose," said they, "Shigai-bai will feast you royally. You will have your fill of fat mutton and of the choicest airan*."

"We shall see about that," said Aldar-Kose.

He rode over the steppe for many days, looking for Shigai-bai's yurt, but wherever he went he was told that Shigai-bai had gone away and that he was to look for him elsewhere.

There was nothing to be done, and Aldar-Kose rode on. At long last he came to a solitary yurt, thick rushes growing all around it.

* *Airan*—a drink made of fermented milk.—Tr.

"There must be some reason for Shigai-bai to have made his home amid the rushes," Aldar-Kose told himself.

And he was right, for Shigai-bai wanted himself and his family to know beforehand if a stranger were anywhere near. The rustling of the rushes warned them of his approach, and then they would try to hide all the food in the house so as to keep from sharing it with their visitor.

This was at once divined by the quick-witted Aldar-Kose, and he began to think of a way of passing through the rushes noiselessly and getting to Shigai-bai's yurt without being heard.

He thought and he thought and he hit on a cunning plan.

Leading his horse off to one side, he began collecting small stones and pebbles and did not stop until he had a good many. After that he waited till it grew dark and then began throwing the stones one at a time into the growth of rushes.

He threw a stone, and the rushes swayed and rustled. Shigai-bai rushed out of the yurt. He looked round him and listened for a moment.

"Who is there?" he called.

No one answered, and Shigai-bai went back into his yurt.

Then Aldar-Kose threw another stone. The rushes rustled, and Shigai-bai darted out of the yurt again. He looked to all sides of him, but saw no one.

"It must be the wind swaying the rushes," said Shigai-bai to himself, and he stopped running out of the yurt.

That was what Aldar-Kose was waiting for. He took his horse by the reins and began making his way through the rushes to the miser's yurt. He would take a step and stop and wait a while, take another and then stop and wait again.

In this way he succeeded in reaching the door of the yurt.

He lifted the hanging of thick felt and looked in. The yurt was crammed with all sorts of things: everywhere were rugs, and cushions, and heavy chests piled one on top of another. And in the middle of the floor, by the fire, sat Shigai-bai and his family. Mutton was boiling in a large pot hanging over the fire, and Shigai-bai was watching it and tasting it now and again to see if it was ready. And he was stuffing a skin with minced meat and making a sausage at the same time. Shigai-bai's wife was kneading dough, his daughter was plucking a goose, and his workman was singeing a sheep's head.

Aldar-Kose stepped inside.

"Good evening," he said.

The same instant Shigai-bai banged shut the lid of the pot and sat

down on top of the sausage, his wife seated herself on the dough, his daughter covered the goose with the hem of her skirt, and his workman hid the sheep's head behind his back.

Shigai-bai greeted Aldar-Kose and asked him what news he had brought and if he had anything of interest to tell him.

"I have indeed," said Aldar-Kose. "In fact, I have seen so many curious things on my way here that it would take too long to tell you about them all."

"If you cannot tell me about all of them, tell me about some of them," said Shigai-bai.

"Well, as I was riding up to your yurta I saw a snake that was bigger than the sausage you sat down on when I stepped inside."

Shigai-bai made a face, but said nothing.

"What's more, the snake had a head as large and black as the sheep's head that your workman just hid behind his back," Aldar-Kose went on.

Shigai-bai made a face again, but said nothing as before.

"And it hissed as it crawled along just like the pot in which your mutton is cooking," said Aldar-Kose. "What I did was jump off my horse and go at the snake with a heavy stone. Its head was squashed, and it looked like the dough on which your wife is sitting. And if I have lied to you may I meet the same fate as the goose your daughter has just plucked."

Shigai-bai winced, so vexed was he, but not a word did he say, nor did he offer any of the food to Aldar-Kose.

Aldar-Kose and Shigai-bai sat talking till late, and the mutton kept boiling and sizzling in the pot, a delicious odour filling the yurta.

Aldar-Kose had been long on the way, he was hungry, and he kept glancing at the pot, his mouth watering. Shigai-bai noticed it and said:

"Boil for a year, my pot!"

At this, Aldar-Kose took off his boots, stretched himself out on the floor, yawned and said:

"Rest for two years, my boots!"

Seeing that his guest did not intend to leave, Shigai-bai decided to go to bed without his supper.

The others followed suit, leaving the pot of mutton on the tripod.

"As soon as Aldar-Kose falls asleep," Shigai-bai told himself, "I'll wake up the family, and we'll have some mutton."

"As soon as Shigai-bai falls asleep," Aldar-Kose told himself, "I'll eat my fill. Why should I go hungry when the mutton in the pot is all cooked!"

Shigai-bai was the first of the two to fall asleep. He lay there for a

time, and then his eyes closed, and his snores filled the yurta.

Aldar-Kose rose, took out the mutton and ate it and then threw Shigai-bai's old boots into the pot. After that he closed the pot, lay down again and waited to see what would happen.

After a time Shigai-bai woke up, listened a moment, looked at Aldar-Kose, and, believing him to be asleep, began prodding his wife and daughter awake.

"Wake up, wake up now!" he said. "We'll have some mutton while Aldar-Kose sleeps."

Shigai-bai removed the lid, took out his boots which he thought to be pieces of meat and cut them up with his knife. They all began to eat, they chewed and chewed, but they could not bite through the pieces. What was wrong, why was the meat so tough?

"It's all that good-for-nothing Aldar-Kose's fault," said Shigai-bai to his wife. "It's because of him that the mutton's grown so tough. But never mind. When he gets out of here, we'll cook it some more till it turns soft and then eat it. And now put the pieces back in the pot."

Shigai-bai's wife gathered up the pieces of leather and put them in the pot, and Shigai-bai told her to make up the fire and bake him some flat cakes out of yesterday's dough.

When the flat cakes were baked, Shigai-bai thrust them into his bosom without waiting for them to cool and went out into the steppe to take a look at his herds.

No sooner had the miser left the yurta than he was followed by Aldar-Kose who ran up to him and said:

"Ah, Shigai-bai, what a good thing it is that I woke up or I would have had to leave without saying goodbye to you. I will soon be going home."

He threw his arms around Shigai-bai and pressed him close, and the flat cakes burned the miser badly.

Shigai-bai bore the pain at first, but then, unable to stand it any longer, cried:

"Oh! Oh! They're burning me! They're burning me!"

And he took them out from his bosom.

"Let the dogs eat them!" he cried.

"How now, Shigai-bai," said Aldar-Kose, "why should you feed your dogs with flat cakes! Why not treat me to some of them!"

And he seized the flat cakes and ate them.

"Your wife makes fine flat cakes, Shigai-bai," said Aldar-Kose. "I've eaten none so good for a long time."

Shigai-bai made no answer, and hungry though he was, rode off to the steppe.

He returned home in the evening, and lo—there was Aldar-Kose sitting in his yurta.

"Did you not say goodbye to me? I thought you were leaving," said Shigai-bai.

"I was going to, but I thought better of it," Aldar-Kose replied. "I like it here in your yurta."

Shigai-bai frowned in vexation, but there was nothing to be done; he could not very well turn his guest out.

The following morning Shigai-bai again prepared to go out to the steppe, and he said to his wife:

"Give me a flask of airan to take with me, but mind that Aldar-Kose does not see you."

Shigai-bai's wife filled a large leather flask with airan and gave it to him, and Shigai-bai hid the flask under the flap of his robe and left the yurta.

"All will be well this time," said he to himself.

But this was not to be. For Aldar-Kose at once ran out and threw his arms around him. So close did he clasp Shigai-bai that the flask of airan overturned, and the airan ran down Shigai-bai's robe.

Mad with rage, Shigai-bai seized the flask, thrust it in Aldar-Kose's hands and cried:

"Drink! Drink!"

"And so I shall, since you ask me to," Aldar-Kose replied. "I do not like to offend you by refusing."

And he drank up all the airan.

Once again Shigai-bai rode off hungry, and Aldar-Kose came into the yurta and began chatting with his wife and daughter.

Aldar-Kose stayed at the miser's house for many days. No matter what cunning Shigai-bai used or what tricks he thought of, he could not outwit his guest. Willy-nilly, he was obliged to feed Aldar-Kose.

From morning till night Shigai-bai kept thinking of a way of turning his guest out of his yurta and of revenging himself upon him.

Aldar-Kose had come to him on a horse with a white star on its head, and Shigai-bai now decided to kill the horse. He looked at the horse intently every time he chanced to go past it, and there was a look of malice in his eye.

Aldar-Kose did not fail to see this, and that same evening he took some soot and smeared it over the white star on his horse's head, dabbing some white clay on the head of Shagai-bai's best stallion at the same time.

He then went into the yurta and to bed.

Night came, and Shigai-bai stole out of the yurta, found the horse with the white star on its head, and killed it.

"Oh, oh, you have fallen on evil days, Aldar-Kose!" he shouted. "Someone has killed your horse!"

But Aldar-Kose stayed where he was.

"Do not take it so hard, Shigai-bai," said he. "You and I will now have plenty of meat to eat."

At this, Shigai-bai laughed in glee, so pleased was he that he had at last revenged himself on his hated guest.

Only in the morning did he see that he had slaughtered his own best stallion.

Shigai-bai nearly burst with fury, but there was no help for it, and he had to cook the meat and share it with Aldar-Kose.

But at last there came the day when Aldar-Kose himself grew weary of staying with Shigai-bai. He decided to go back to his own village and to carry Shigai-bai's daughter off with him.

"Far better for her if she marries me," he told himself. "Living as she does in the house of her father, she is sure to become as stingy as he."

Now, Shigai-bai's daughter was named Biz-Bulduk, and she had liked the high-spirited Aldar-Kose at sight and kept stealing glances at him.

One morning, when Shigai-bai was about to ride off to the steppe, as usual, and had already mounted his horse, Aldar-Kose said to him:

"I have been your guest long enough, Shigai-bai. It is time I went home. When you return at night there will be room enough and to spare in your yurta."

Shigai-bai could hardly believe his ears.

"Only give me your biz*," Aldar-Kose went on. "I want to repair my boots before I leave."

"Very well, very well," said Shigai-bai. "Take the biz, repair your boots and be off with you. It's high time!"

And with these words he left the yurta.

And as for Aldar-Kose, he came inside and said to Shigai-bai's wife:

"Get Biz-Bulduk ready, my good woman, she is coming with me."

"Are you out of your mind?" Shigai-bai's wife exclaimed. "Do you think that Shigai-bai will ever let a beggar like you marry our daughter?"

"He has given her to me already. If you don't believe me, ask him yourself."

Shigai-bai's wife ran out of the yurta.

* Biz—awl.—Tr.

"Shigai-bai!" she called. "Is it true that our Biz is to be Aldar-Kose's?"

"It is, it is!" Shigai-bai called back. "Give him our biz, and let him get out of the house!"

And with these words, Shigai-bai whipped up his horse and rode away.

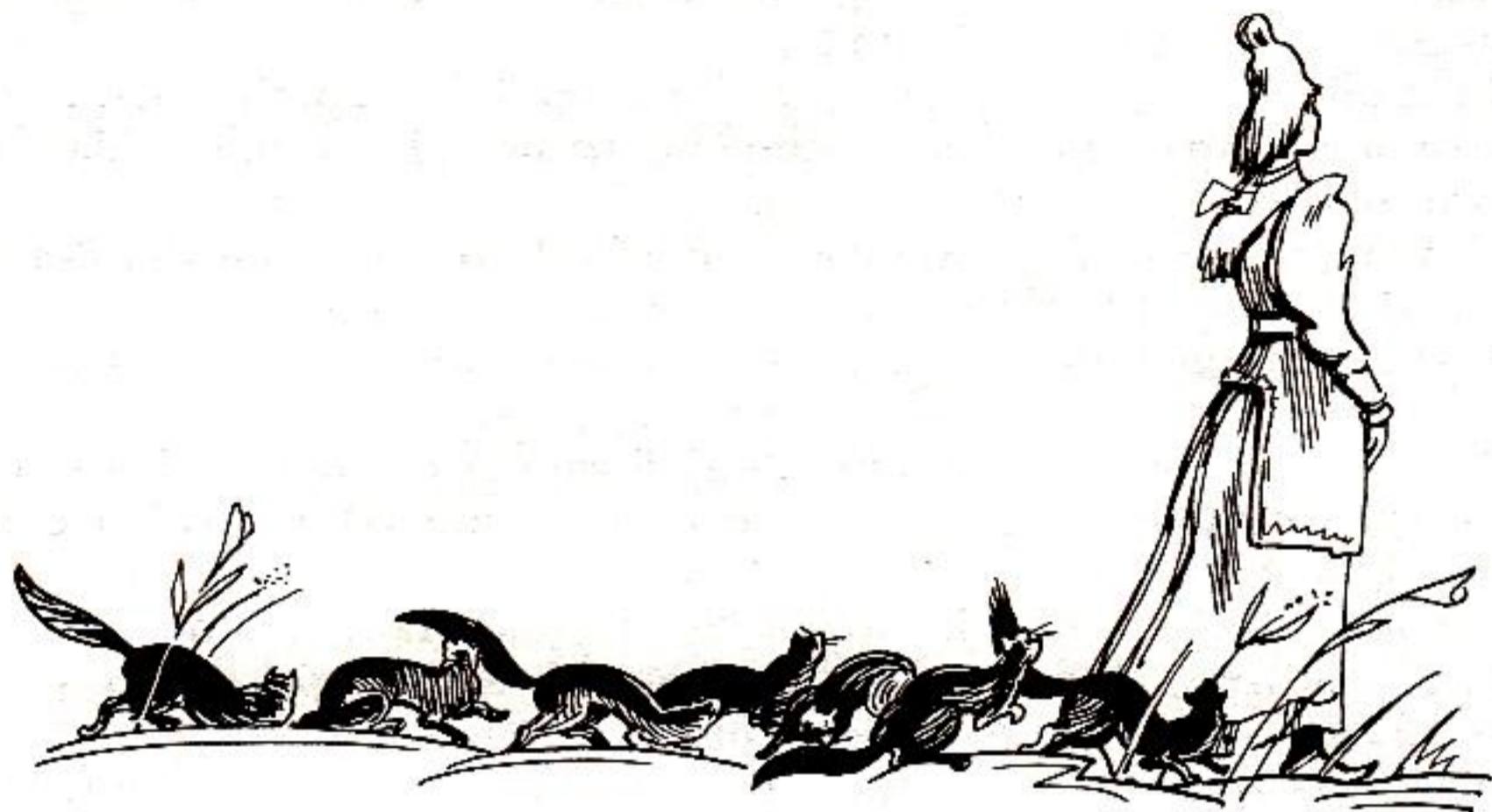
Shigai-bai's wife dared not disobey him and she got her daughter ready and led her out of the yurta. And Aldar-Kose put the girl on the horse with the white star on its head, and away they rode, leaving Shigai-bai's yurta far behind them.

"You will live among good people and become good yourself," said Aldar-Kose.

It was evening when Shigai-bai came back. Learning about what had taken place in his absence, he turned red with rage, leapt on his horse's back and galloped off in pursuit of Aldar-Kose. He rode all over the steppe, but he could not find him anywhere and had to come back empty-handed.

THE FERN GIRL

A Yakut Fairy Tale



Early one morning in times long past a little old woman, mistress of five cows, rose from bed and went out to the field.

In the field, which was big and wide, she saw a horsetail, a fern with five shoots. She pulled it out without damaging the root or any of the shoots, brought it to her yurta and put it on her pillow. Then she went out again, and, sitting down, began milking her cows.

She sat there, and all of a sudden she heard the jingle-jingling of bells in the yurta. Dropping her pail and spilling the milk in her haste, she ran into the yurta and looked around her, but everything was as it had been: there lay the horsetail on the pillow, a fern like any other. The old woman went out once more, and, sitting down as before, began milking her cows when she heard the jingle-jingling of bells again. Spilling the milk in her haste, she ran into the yurta and whom did she see sitting on her bed but a girl of rare beauty. The girl's eyes sparkled like precious stones and her brows were like two black sables. The fern had turned into a girl!

The little old woman was overjoyed.

"Stay with me and be a daughter to me," said she to the girl.

And so the two made their home in the yurta.

One day a young hunter named Kharzhit-Bergen was out hunting in the taiga. He saw a grey squirrel and he shot an arrow, and he kept on

shooting arrows from early morning till sunset, but never once did he hit the squirrel.

The squirrel bounded up a spruce-tree, leapt from the spruce-tree to a birch-tree and then on to a larch-tree, and, reaching the little old woman's yurta, settled in a pine-tree.

Kharzhit-Bergen ran up to the pine-tree and shot another arrow, but the squirrel darted away again, and the arrow fell into the smoke hole of the old woman's yurta.

"I want my arrow, old woman, give it back to me!" Kharzhit-Bergen shouted, but the little old woman did not come out and made no reply.

Kharzhit-Bergen was very angry, he flushed with rage and he ran into the yurta.

There before him sat a beautiful girl. Such was her beauty that it took his breath away. He ran out without a word, jumped on his horse and galloped home.

"O my parents," said he to his mother and father, "the little old woman, mistress of five cows, has a most beautiful girl in her yurta. Send matchmakers there, for I want her for my wife."

And Kharzhit-Bergen's father at once sent nine men mounted on nine horses for the girl.

The matchmakers came to the little old woman's yurta, they saw the girl, and such was her beauty that it made their heads swim. They stood there gazing at her, but then, coming to their senses, left the yurta, all save one, the oldest and most respected among them.

"Little old woman," said he, "will you not give this young girl to Kharzhit-Bergen to be his wife?"

"That I will," the little old woman replied.

Then they asked the girl if she was willing, and the girl said that she was.

"You will have to pay a big ransom for the bride," said the little old woman. "You must give me as many cows and horses as my field will hold."

The cows and horses were soon driven to the little old woman's field, and so many were they that one lost count of them.

Then they dressed the girl in fine new clothes, and, bringing a dappled horse, bridled him with a silver bridle, saddled him with a silver saddle and hung a silver whip at his side. Kharzhit-Bergen took his bride by the hand, led her out, put her on the dappled horse and rode home with her.

They were on the way for some time when Kharzhit-Bergen saw a fox on the road.



Said Kharzhit-Bergen to his bride, for he could not help himself:

"I am going to ride after the fox, but will soon be back. And you must follow this road till you reach the place where it branches off in two directions. On the eastern side a sable-skin will hang, on the western side, the hide of a bear with a white throat. Do not turn down the western road. Follow the road where you see the sable-skin."

And with these words he galloped away.

The girl rode on alone and in due time reached the fork in the road. But no sooner was she there than she forgot what Kharzhit-Bergen had said and turned down the road where the bearskin was hanging. She soon came to a large iron yurt, and just as she got there, the eighth devil's daughter stepped out of it. She had one leg, and that was crooked, one arm, as crooked as the leg, one hideous dead eye in the very middle of her forehead, and a long black tongue that hung down to her breast.

The devil's daughter seized the girl, dragged her off her horse, stripped the skin from off her face and stretched it over her own. Then she pulled off all of the girl's fine clothes, and, dressing herself in them, threw the girl over the yurt. After that she mounted the dappled horse and rode east.

Kharzhit-Bergen caught up with her when she was nearing his father's yurt. But he saw nothing and guessed nothing.

All Kharzhit-Bergen's kin gathered to welcome the bride. Nine handsome young men and eight girls came out to the tethering post to meet her.

The girls spoke among themselves, and they said:

"The bride has only to open her mouth and speak one word, and the prettiest beads will drop out and roll over the ground."

And they brought thread so as to string the beads.

The young men spoke among themselves, and they said:

"The bride has only to take one step, and wherever she passes, black sables will follow in her footsteps."

And they got their bows and arrows ready so as to shoot the sables.

But when the bride started to speak, frogs dropped from her mouth, and when she took one step, mangy stoats ran after her.

All who had come to meet the bride stood aghast and grew sad at heart.

But they spread a carpet of green grass on the ground, and so long was it that it stretched from the tethering post to the bridegroom's yurt, and, taking the bride by the hand, led her there.

The bride went into the yurt, and, using the crowns of three young larches, made up a fire in the hearth.

After that there was a wedding feast, and everyone ate and drank and played games and made merry. No one guessed that this was not the real bride at all.

Soon after this the little old woman came to her field to milk her cows. She looked, and she saw that a new horsetail with five shoots had grown up in the selfsame spot, and it was even more straight and slender than the first one.

The little old woman dug up the horsetail together with the root, took it to her yurta and put it on her pillow. Then she went back to the field and began milking her cows. Suddenly she heard the jingle-jingling of bells in the yurta. She went inside, and whom did she see there but the very same girl, looking more beautiful than ever.

"How is it that you are here, why have you come back?" the little old woman asked.

"When Kharzhit-Bergen and I were on our way to his yurta, O my mother," the girl replied, "he told me that he was going to ride after a fox and that I was to follow the road where a sable skin was hanging and in no wise to turn down the road where a bear's hide had been hung. But I forgot his warning, took the wrong road and soon came to an iron yurta. The eighth devil's daughter met me, she clawed the skin from off my face and stretched it over her own. Then she pulled off all my fine clothes, and, dressing herself in them, threw me over her iron yurta. After that she mounted my dappled horse and rode away. Some dogs seized me and dragged me to the wide field near your yurta, and I came to life again in the guise of a horsetail. Ah, mother, will I ever see Kharzhit-Bergen again?"

The little old woman heard out her story and began trying to comfort her.

"Do not be troubled, you will see him," said she. "And in the meantime stay with me as before and be my daughter."

And so the fern girl began living in the little old woman's yurta again.

Now, the dappled horse learned that the fern girl had come to life, and he spoke to Kharzhit-Bergen's father in a human voice and said:

"Know, O master, that Kharzhit-Bergen left his bride alone as he was bringing her here, and she had to ride on by herself. When she reached the fork in the road she turned down the path where the bear's hide was hanging and came to an iron yurta. The eighth devil's daughter rushed out, tore the skin from off her face and stretched it over her own, pulled off her fine clothes and dressed herself in them, and then she threw her over the iron yurta. Now the devil's daughter lives in your yurta and you have her for your daughter-in-law. And as for my

true mistress, she has come to life again. You must bring her back to your yurta and give her to your son in marriage, else things will go hard with you. The devil's daughter will pull down your hearth and your yurta, she will make your life a misery and do away with you all."

The old man rushed into the yurta.

"Where did you bring your wife from, my son?" asked he of Kharzhit-Bergen. "Who is she?"

"She is the daughter of the little old woman, mistress of five cows," Kharzhit-Bergen replied.

Said the father:

"The dappled horse has been complaining to me. He says that you left your bride alone as you were bringing her here and that when she reached the fork in the road she took the path that brought her to the iron yurta. The eighth devil's daughter dragged her from the horse's back, clawed the skin from off her face and stretched it over her own, and she put on all her fine clothes. The devil's daughter has deceived us all, she has made her home here by a wily trick. Go to the little old woman and beg your bride to return to us. Bring her here. As for the devil's daughter, tie her to the tail of a wild horse and drive the horse out into the open field. Let it strew her bones over it! If you do not do this, we will all perish."

The devil's daughter heard him, and her face turned dark with fear and rage.

Kharzhit-Bergen heard him, and he grew red with anger.

He seized the devil's daughter, dragged her out by her leg from the yurta and tied her to the tail of a wild horse.

The horse galloped off into the wide field, it trampled the devil's daughter to death and turned her body into a mass of worms and snakes, and these Kharzhit-Bergen and his father gathered and burned.

After that Kharzhit-Bergen set off on horseback for the little old woman's yurta. He leapt from his horse by the tethering post, and the little old woman saw him and hurried outside. She was very happy, as happy as one is if someone dear to one and thought lost or dead has been found. She spread a carpet of green grass on the ground and so long was it that it stretched from the tethering post to the yurta, and she slaughtered her best and fattest cow and her best and fleshiest horse and began preparing the wedding feast.

As for the fern girl, she looked at Kharzhit-Bergen and burst out crying.

"Why are you here?" she asked him. "You let the daughter of the eighth devil spill my blood, tear my skin and throw my body to the

dogs. How can you face me now? There are more maids in the world than there are perches, there are more women in the world than there are pikes. Go and seek for a wife among them. I will not marry you!"

"I never gave you to the daughter of the eighth devil," said Kharzhit-Bergen, "nor did I throw you to the dogs. When I rode off to the taiga after the fox I showed you the road you had to take. I did not tell you to go and meet your death."

The little old woman brushed the tears from her right eye, she brushed the tears from her left eye and she seated herself between the fern girl and Kharzhit-Bergen.

Said the little old woman:

"How is it that you who died and then came back to life, you who were lost and then found, how is it that you do not rejoice? You must love each other as before and live in friendship and peace. Heed my words, both of you, and do as I say."

The girl bowed her head.

"Very well, I will do as you say, I will forgive and forget," she said.

At this Kharzhit-Bergen jumped to his feet and began dancing and capering about and embracing and kissing the fern girl.

Then they saddled the dappled horse with a silver saddle and they bridled him with a silver bridle, they covered him with a silver horse cloth and they hung a silver whip at his side. And the fern girl they dressed in the best of finery, and she and Kharzhit-Bergen set off on their way.

For a long time they rode. Winter they knew by the snow that fell, summer they knew by the rain that poured, autumn they knew by the fog that hung over the fields. On and on they rode and never stopped till they came to the yurta of Kharzhit-Bergen's father.

All Kharzhit-Bergen's kin, all his nine brothers came out to meet the bride, and they spread a carpet of green grass, stretching from the tethering post to the yurta, for her to walk on.

"The bride will soon be here," said they, "and at every step she takes, sables will leap from out of her footprints."

And with this in mind, they began making bows and arrows and worked so hard that the skin peeled from their hands.

And Kharzhit-Bergen's eight sisters began spinning thread, and they too worked so hard that the skin came off their fingers.

"The bride will soon be here, she will speak in silvery tones, and precious red beads will drop from her mouth," said they.

Then Kharzhit-Bergen arrived with his bride, and two of his sisters tied their horses to the tethering post. They caught the bride in their

arms and they let her down to the ground. The bride spoke in silvery tones, and red beads dropped from her mouth, and the girls began gathering the beads and threading them on a string. The bride walked to the yurta and black sables ran from out of her footprints, and the young men took their bows and arrows and began shooting them.

The bride came into the yurta, and, using the crowns of three young larches, made up a fire in the hearth.

A gay wedding feast was held, to which guests from all the villages were invited. There were singers among them and dancers, story-tellers and wrestlers, and tumblers too.

For three days the feast went on and then it was over, and the guests went home, some on foot and others on horseback.

And Kharzhit-Bergen and his wife set up house together. They had a long and happy life, and it is said that their grandchildren are living still.

THE GOLDEN CUP

A Buryat Fairy Tale

Long, long ago there lived a mighty Khan named Sanad.

One day he decided to remove himself and all his people to new lands where the camping sites were better and the pastures richer. But the way to those lands was long and hard.

Before leaving, Sanad Khan ordered all the old people to be killed.

"They will be a burden to us on the way," he said. "Not one old man or woman must we have with us, not one must be left alive. He who does not carry out my command will be severely punished."

It was a cruel order, and the people's hearts were heavy, but they all feared the Khan and dared not disobey him.

Only one of Sanad Khan's subjects, a young man named Tsyren, vowed that he would not kill his old father.

Tsyren told his father that he would hide him in a large leather sack and carry him with him in secret from Sanad Khan and everyone else too. And as for what might happen later, well, that was not to be thought of yet.

Sanad Khan left the old camping site and together with his people and herds set out for the far-off lands in the north. And with them, in a large leather sack slung across his horse's back, went Tsyren's old father. Unknown to the others, Tsyren gave his father food and drink, and



whenever they made camp, he would wait until it was quite dark, untie the sack and let out the old man that he might rest and stretch his aching limbs.

So they rode for a long time till they reached the shores of a great sea, and Sanad Khan ordered his people to halt there and make camp.

Now, it so happened that one of the Khan's attendants went down to the water's edge and he saw something that sparkled and gleamed lying on the bottom. He took a closer look and could now make out that it was a large golden cup of unusual shape. So, being a loyal subject, back he went to the Khan and told him about it.

And Sanad Khan ordered the cup to be delivered to him at once. But since no one dared to dive into the sea, he gave orders that they draw lots.

The lot fell upon one of the Khan's own men. The man dived in, but he never came up again.

They drew lots again, and the man upon whom the lot fell this time leapt into the sea from the top of a steep cliff and was never seen again, either.

In this way many of Sanad Khan's people lost their lives.

But the merciless Khan did not so much as think of giving up his venture, and one after another of his subjects dived unprotesting into the sea and perished.

At last the turn of Tsyren came to dive in after the cup, but before doing so, he went to the place where he had hidden his father to bid him goodbye.

"Farewell, Father," said Tsyren. "We are going to die, both of us."

"Why do you say that? What has happened?" the old man asked.

Tsyren then explained that the lot had fallen upon him to dive to the bottom of the sea after the cup.

"Not one of those who dived in came up again," said he. "And so I am to perish in the sea by the Khan's orders, and you will be found here and killed by his servants."

The old man heard him out in silence.

"If this is allowed to continue, you will all be drowned without ever getting the golden cup," he said. "For there is no cup at the bottom of the sea. See that mountain there? Well, the golden cup is standing on its top. What you take to be the cup is only its reflection."

"What shall I do?" Tsyren asked.

"Climb the mountain and deliver the cup to the Khan. It should not be difficult to find, for it sparkles so that it can be seen from afar. But if you see that the mountain is too steep for you to climb, you must wait

until some roes appear there. When they do, you must frighten them, and in their haste to get away they will push down the cup. Waste no time then, but snatch it up quickly, for if you don't, it might fall into a deep ravine and be lost to you for ever."

Tsyren thanked his father and at once made for the mountain.

It was not easy to climb, and Tsyren had to clutch at shrubs, trees and sharp rocks, scratching his face and hands and tearing his clothes as he did so. He saw the golden cup when he had all but reached the top. It stood on a high rock and sparkled in the sun.

Tsyren saw that he would never be able to reach it. And, remembering his father's counsel, stopped and waited for the roes to appear.

He had not long to wait. Several roes soon made their appearance on the rock and stood there gazing calmly down. Tsyren gave a loud shout. The roes were startled and began rushing to and fro, and in their haste to get away they pushed the golden cup. The cup came rolling down, and Tsyren caught it as it fell.

Pleased and happy, he made his way down the mountain, the cup in his hands, and, going up to Sanad Khan, placed it before him.

"How did you get this cup from the bottom of the sea?" the Khan asked him.

"It was not there that I found it," Tsyren replied, "but on the top of that mountain yonder. What we saw in the water was only the cup's reflection."

"Was it you yourself who came to think of it?" the Khan asked.

"Yes," Tsyren replied.

The Khan asked him nothing more and let him go.

The following day, Sanad Khan and his people moved on.

After journeying for a long time they reached a great desert where the sun had baked the earth and burnt up the grass. There was no river anywhere to be seen and no spring, either, and the men and the cattle began to suffer from thirst. Sanad Khan sent horsemen in all directions in search of water, but try as they would, no water could they find. The people did not know what to do and were filled with despair.

Tsyren made his way to where he had left his father.

"What are we to do, Father?" he asked. "We are all dying of thirst, and so are the cattle."

Said the old man:

"Let a three-year-old cow roam about at will and watch it closely. Wherever it stops and starts sniffing at the ground, there you must dig."

Tsyren did as his father said. He let loose a three-year-old cow and watched as it wandered from place to place. And as soon as it stopped and began sniffing at the earth, he called to the others and told them that there was water to be found there.

They began digging, and lo and behold!—cool, clear water gushed out from an underground spring and flowed over the ground. Everyone drank his fill and was cheered and heartened.

Sanad Khan called Tsyren to his side.

“How is it that you were able to find water in this dry spot?” he asked.

“Certain signs told me where it was,” Tsyren replied.

They all drank some more water, rested and then moved on and only after a journey of many days did they stop again and pitch camp. Unexpectedly it began to rain hard in the night, and the campfire was put out. Hard as they tried, the people could not make up the fire again and were chilled to the bone.

Then someone noticed what seemed to be the light of a campfire on the top of a distant mountain.

Sanad Khan at once gave orders that the fire be brought down from the mountain.

The people rushed to do as he bade. First one man, then another, then a third climbed the mountain. Each found the fire which flamed beneath the thick branches of a large spruce-tree, and also the hunter who was warming himself at it, and each took away with him a burning log, but none succeeded in bringing it as far as the camp, for the heavy rain put out the flames.

Sanad Khan was very angry, and he gave orders for all who returned without the fire to be put to death.

When the turn of Tsyren came to go up the mountain, he crept to where he had hidden his father.

“What is to be done, Father? How is a burning log to be carried down to the camp?” he asked.

Said the old man:

“Do not take the logs, for they’ll only smoulder, and the flames will be put out by the rain. Take a large pot with you instead and fill it full of burning coals. Only thus will you be able to bring the fire to the camp.”

Tsyren did as his father said and brought a potful of live coals from the mountain. He made up a fire, and the people warmed themselves and cooked food over it.

When Sanad Khan learned who it was that had brought the fire, he ordered Tsyren to come to him.

"How is it that you who knew how to fetch the fire kept silent about it?" the Khan roared. "Why did you not speak up at once?"

"Because I did not know how it was to be done myself," Tsyren told him.

"Yet you were able to do it. How so?"

And so insistently did he ply him with questions that Tsyren finally confessed that he had only been able to carry out his commands because of his father's wise counsels.

"Where is your father?" the Khan asked.

"I carried him all the way here in a large leather sack," Tsyren said.

Sanad Khan commanded the old man to be brought before him.

"I rescind my order," he said to him. "Old people are no burden to the young, for age is wisdom. You need hide no longer, but may ride freely with the rest."

KOTURA, LORD OF THE WINDS

A Nenets Fairy Tale



Long, long ago, in a nomad camp, there lived an old man with his three daughters, the youngest of whom was the kindest and cleverest of the three.

The old man was very poor. His choom, his tent of skins, was worn and full of holes, and there was little warm clothing to wear. When the frost was very fierce the old man would huddle by the fire with his three daughters and try to keep warm. At night, before going to bed, they would put out the fire and shiver from the cold until morning.

Once, in the middle of winter, a terrible snowstorm came down on the tundra. The wind blew for a day, it blew for a second day, and it blew for a third day, and it seemed as if all the chooms would be blown away. The people dared not show their faces outside and sat in the chooms, hungry and cold.

So, too, the old man and his three daughters. They sat in the choom and listened to the storm raging, and the old man said:

"We'll never be able to sit out this blizzard. It was sent by Kotura, Lord of the Winds. He sounds angry and must be waiting for us to send him a good wife. You, my eldest daughter, must go to Kotura or else all our people will perish. You must go and beg him to stop the blizzard."

"How can I go to him?" the girl asked. "I don't know the way."

"I will give you a little sledge. Place it so that it faces the wind, give it a push and follow it. The wind will untie the strings of your coat, but

you must not stop to tie them. The snow will get into your shoes, but you must not stop to shake it out. Never pause till you reach a tall mountain. Climb it, and when you get to the top, then only can you stop to shake out the snow from your shoes and tie the strings on your coat. By and by a little bird will fly up to you and perch on your shoulder. Do not chase it away, be kind to it and fondle it gently. Then get into your sledge and coast down the mountain. The sledge will bring you straight to the door of Kotura's choom. Enter the choom, but touch nothing, just sit there and wait. When Kotura comes, do all he tells you to."

Eldest Daughter put on her furs, placed the sledge her father gave her so that it faced the wind, and sent it gliding along with a push.

She walked after it a little way, and the strings on her coat came undone, the snow got into her shoes and she was very, very cold. She did not do as her father bade but stopped and began to tie the strings of her coat and to shake the snow out of her shoes. After that she moved on, in the face of the wind. She walked a long time till at last she saw a tall mountain. No sooner had she climbed it than a little bird flew up to her and was about to perch on her shoulder. But Eldest Daughter waved her hands to chase it off, and the bird circled over her for a little while and then flew away. Eldest Daughter got into her sledge and coasted down the mountainside, and the sledge stopped by a large choom.

The girl came inside and looked about her, and the first thing she saw was a large piece of roasted venison. She made up a fire, warmed herself and began to tear pieces of fat off the meat. She would tear off a piece and eat it, and then tear off another and eat it too, and she had eaten her fill when all of a sudden she heard someone coming up to the choom. The skin that hung over the entrance was lifted, and a young giant entered. This was Kotura himself. He looked at Eldest Daughter and said:

"Where do you come from, woman, and what do you want here?"

"My father sent me to you," answered Eldest Daughter.

"Why did he do that?"

"So that you would take me to wife."

"I was out hunting and have brought back some meat. Stand up now and cook it for me," Kotura said.

Eldest Daughter did as she was told, and when the meat was ready, Kotura told her to take it out of the pot and divide it in two parts.

"You and I will eat one half of the meat," he said, "and you will put the other half in a wooden dish and take it to the neighbouring choom. Do not go into the choom yourself but wait at the entrance. An old

woman will come out to you. Give her the meat and wait till she brings back the empty dish."

Eldest Daughter took the meat and went outside. The wind was howling and the snow falling, and it was quite dark. How could one find anything in such a storm!... Eldest Daughter walked off a little way, stopped, thought a while and then threw the meat in the snow. After that she came back to Kotura with the empty dish.

Kotura glanced at her.

"Have you given our neighbours the meat?" he asked.

"Yes, I have," Eldest Daughter replied.

"Show me the dish, I want to see what they gave you in return."

Eldest Daughter showed him the empty dish, but Kotura said nothing. He ate his share of the meat and went to bed.

In the morning he rose, brought some untanned deerskins into the choom and said:

"While I am out hunting, dress these skins and make me a new coat out of them and new shoes and mittens. I will put them on when I come back and see just how clever you are with your hands."

And with these words, Kotura went off to hunt in the tundra, and Eldest Daughter set to work. Suddenly the hanging of skin over the entrance lifted, and a grey-haired old woman came in.

"Something has got into my eye, child," said she. "See if you can take it out."

"I have no time to bother with you," answered Eldest Daughter, "I am busy."

The old woman said nothing but turned away and went out of the choom. Eldest Daughter was left alone. She dressed the skins hastily and began cutting them with a knife, hurrying to get her work finished by evening. Indeed, in such a hurry was she that she did not even try to make the clothes nicely. She had no needle to sew with and only one day to do the work in, and she could hardly get anything done at all.

It was evening when Kotura came back.

"Are my new clothes ready?" he asked her.

"They are," Eldest Daughter replied.

Kotura took the clothes, he ran his hands over them, and the skins felt rough to his touch, so badly were they dressed. He looked, and he saw that the garments were poorly cut, sewn together carelessly and much too small for him.

At this he became very angry and threw Eldest Daughter out of the choom. He threw her far, far out, and she fell into a drift of snow and lay there till she froze to death.

And the howling of the wind became fiercer than ever.

The old man sat in his choom, he listened to the wind howling and the storm raging day in and day out and said:

"Eldest Daughter did not heed my words, she did not do as I bade. That is why the wind does not stop howling. Kotura is angry. You must go to him, my second daughter."

The old man made a little sledge, he told Second Daughter just what he had told Eldest Daughter, and he sent her off to Kotura. And himself he remained in the choom with his youngest daughter and waited for the blizzard to stop.

Second Daughter placed the sledge so that it faced the wind, and, giving it a push, went along after it. The strings of her coat came undone as she walked and the snow got into her shoes. She was very cold, and, forgetting her father's behest, shook the snow out of her shoes and tied the strings of her coat sooner than he had told her to.

She came to the mountain and climbed it, and, seeing the little bird, waved her hands and chased it away. Then she got into her sledge and coasted down the mountainside straight up to Kotura's choom.

She entered the choom, made up a fire, had her fill of venison and sat down to wait for Kotura.

Kotura came back from his hunting, he saw Second Daughter and asked her:

"Why have you come to me?"

"My father sent me to you," replied Second Daughter.

"Why did he do that?"

"So that you would take me to wife."

"Why do you sit there, then? I am hungry, be quick and cook me some meat."

When the meat was ready, Kotura ordered Second Daughter to take it out of the pot and cut it in two parts.

"You and I will eat one half of the meat," Kotura said. "As for the other, put it in that wooden dish yonder and take it to the neighbouring choom. Do not enter the choom yourself but stand near it and wait for your dish to be brought out to you."

Second Daughter took the meat and went outside. The wind was howling and the snow whirling and it was hard to make out anything. So, not liking to go any farther, she threw the meat in the snow, stood there a while and then went back to Kotura.

"Have you given them the meat?" Kotura asked.

"Yes, I have," Second Daughter replied.

"You have come back very soon. Show me the dish, I want to see what they gave you in return."

Second Daughter did as she was told, and Kotura glanced at the empty dish, but said not a word and went to bed. In the morning he brought in some untanned deerskins and told Second Daughter, just as he had her sister, to make him some new clothes by evening.

"Set to work," he said. "In the evening I will see how well you can sew."

With these words Kotura went off to hunt, and Second Daughter set to work. She was in a great hurry, for somehow she had to get everything done by evening. Suddenly a grey-haired old woman came into the choom.

"A mote has got into my eye, child," she said. "Please take it out. I cannot do it myself."

"I am too busy to bother with your old mote!" Second Daughter replied. "Go away and let me work."

And the old woman looked at her and went away without another word.

It was night when Kotura came back.

"Are my new clothes ready?" he asked.

"Yes, they are," Second Daughter replied.

"Let me try them on, then."

Kotura put on the clothes and he saw that they were badly cut and much too small and that the seams ran all askew. Kotura flew into a rage, he threw Second Daughter where he had thrown her sister, and she too froze to death.

And the old man sat in his choom with his youngest daughter and waited in vain for the storm to calm down. The wind was fiercer than ever, and it seemed as if the choom would be blown away any minute.

"My daughters did not heed my words," the old man said. "They have made things worse, they have angered Kotura. You are my last remaining daughter, but still I must send you to Kotura in the hope that he will take you to wife. If I don't, all of our people will perish from hunger. So get ready, daughter, and go."

And he told her where to go and what to do.

Youngest Daughter came out of the choom, she placed the sledge so that it faced the wind and sent it gliding along with a push. The wind was howling and roaring, trying to throw Youngest Daughter off her feet, and the snow blinded her eyes so that she could see nothing.

But Youngest Daughter plodded on through the blizzard, never forgetting a word of her father's behest and doing just as he had bade. The strings of her coat came undone, but she did not stop to tie them. The snow got into her shoes, but she did not stop to shake it out. It was

very cold, and the wind was very strong, but she did not pause and went on and on. It was only when she came to the mountain and climbed it that she stopped and began shaking the snow out of her shoes and tying the strings of her coat. Then a little bird flew up to her and perched on her shoulder. But Youngest Daughter did not chase the bird away. Instead, she fondled and stroked it tenderly. When the bird flew away Youngest Daughter got into her sledge and coasted down the mountainside straight up to Kotura's choom.

She came into the choom and waited. Suddenly the skin over the entrance was lifted and the young giant came in. When he saw Youngest Daughter he laughed and said:

"Why have you come to me?"

"My father sent me to you," answered Youngest Daughter.

"Why did he do that?"

"To beg you to stop the storm, for if you don't all our people will perish."

"Why do you sit there? Why don't you make up a fire and cook some meat?" Kotura said. "I am hungry, and so must you be, too, for I see you have eaten nothing since you came."

Youngest Daughter cooked the meat quickly, took it out of the pot and gave it to Kotura, and Kotura ate some of it and then told her to take half of the meat to the neighbouring choom.

Youngest Daughter took the dish of meat and went outside. The wind was roaring loudly and the snow whirling and spinning. Where was she to go? Where was the choom Kotura told her of to be found? She stood there a while, thinking, and then she started out through the storm, not knowing herself where she was going.

Suddenly there appeared before her the very same little bird that had flown up to her on the mountain and began darting about near her face. Youngest Daughter decided to follow the bird. Whichever way the bird flew, there she went. On and on she walked, and at last saw what looked like a spark flashing a little distance away. Youngest Daughter was overjoyed and went in that direction, thinking that the choom was there. But when she drew near, she found that what she had thought to be a choom was a mound with smoke curling up from it. Youngest Daughter walked round the mound and prodded it with her foot, and suddenly there, in the side of the mound, she saw a door. It opened before her, and a grey-haired old woman looked out.

"Who are you? Why have you come here?" she asked.

"I have brought you some meat, grandmother," Youngest Daughter replied. "Kotura asked me to give it to you."

"Kotura, you say? Very well, then, let me have it. And you wait here, outside."

Youngest Daughter stood by the mound and waited. She waited a long time. At last the door opened again, and the old woman looked out and handed her the dish. There was something in it, but the girl could not make out what it was. She took the dish and returned with it to Kotura.

"Why were you away so long?" Kotura asked. "Did you find the choom?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did you give them the meat?"

"Yes."

"Let me have the dish, I want to see what is in it."

Kotura looked, and he saw that there were several knives in the dish and also steel needles and scrapers and brakes for dressing skins. Kotura laughed aloud.

"You have received many fine things that will be very useful to you," he said.

In the morning Kotura rose and he brought some deerskins into the choom and ordered Youngest Daughter to make him a new coat, shoes and mittens by evening.

"If you make them nicely," he said, "I will take you to wife."

Kotura went away, and Youngest Daughter set to work. The old woman's present proved very useful. Youngest Daughter had everything she needed to make the clothes with. She was not sure that she could do much in a single day, but spent no time thinking about it and tried to do as much as she could. She dressed the skins and she scraped them, she cut and she sewed. All of a sudden the skin over the entrance lifted, and a grey-haired old woman came in. Youngest Daughter knew her at once: it was the same old woman to whom she had taken the meat.

"Help me, my child," the old woman said. "There's a mote in my eye. Please take it out for me, I cannot do it myself."

Youngest Daughter did not refuse. She put aside her work and soon had the mote out of the old woman's eye.

"Good!" said the old woman. "My eye does not hurt any more. Now look in my right ear."

Youngest Daughter looked in the old woman's ear and started.

"What do you see there?" the old woman asked.

"There is a girl sitting in your ear," Youngest Daughter replied.

"Why don't you call her? She will help you make Kotura's clothes for him."

Youngest Daughter was overjoyed and called to the girl. At her call, not one, but four young girls jumped out of the old woman's ear, and all four set to work. They dressed the skins and they scraped them, they cut and they sewed. The garments were soon ready. After that the old woman hid the four girls in her ear again and went away.

It was evening when Kotura came back.

"Have you done all that I told you to do?" he asked.

"Yes, I have," Youngest Daughter replied.

"Let me see my new clothes, I will try them on."

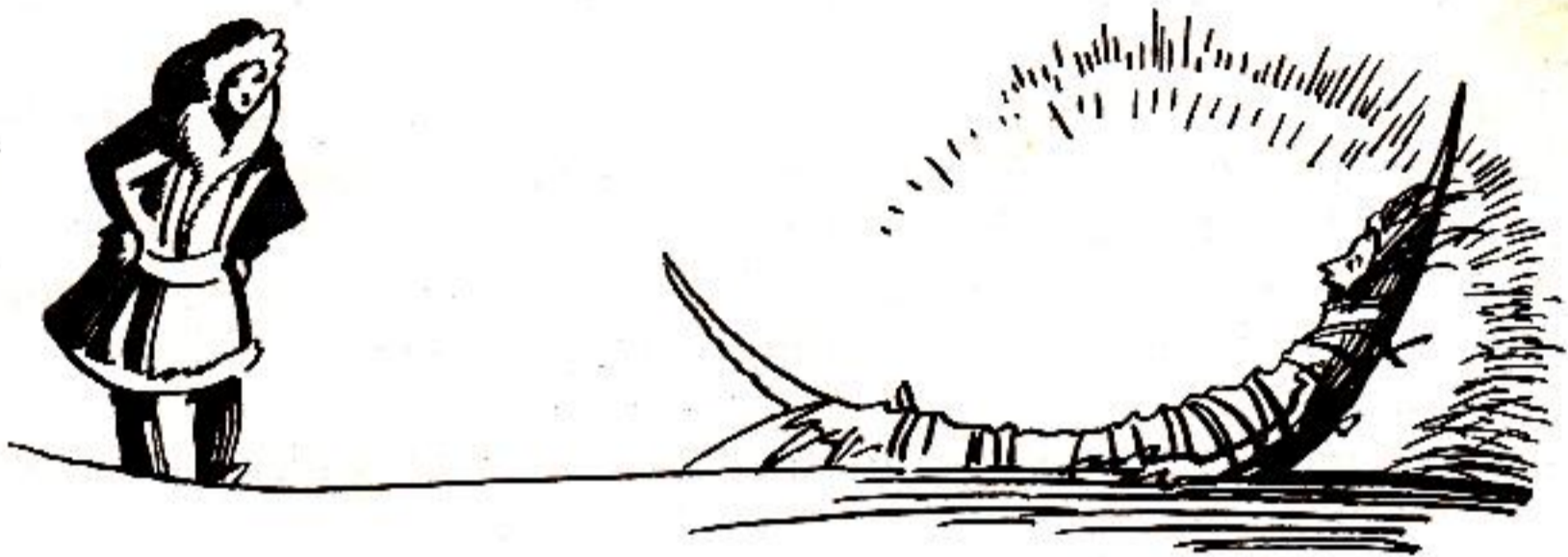
Youngest Daughter gave him the clothes, and Kotura took them and passed his hand over them: the skins were soft and pleasant to the touch. He put on the garments, and they were neither too small nor too large but fitted him well and were made to last. Kotura smiled.

"I like you, Youngest Daughter, and my mother and four sisters like you too," he said. "You work well and you have courage. You braved a terrible storm in order that your people might not perish. Be my wife, stay with me in my choom."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the storm in the tundra was stilled. No longer did the people try to hide from the wind, no longer did they freeze. One and all, they came out of their chooms into the light of day!

THE GIRL AND THE MOON MAN

A Chukchi Fairy Tale



There once lived among the Chukchi a man who had only one child, a daughter. The girl was her father's best helpmate. She spent every summer far away from the camping grounds, watching over her father's herd of deer, and every winter she would take the herd even farther. Only once in a while would she return to the camp for food.

One night, as she was riding to the camp, her draught-deer lifted his head and glanced up at the sky.

"Look! Look!" he cried.

The girl looked up and saw the Moon Man coming down the sky on a sledge drawn by two reindeer.

"Where is he going and why?" the girl asked.

"He wants to carry you away," the deer replied.

The girl was much alarmed.

"What am I to do? He might really carry me off with him!" she cried.

Without a word the draught-deer began raking away the snow with his hoof until he had scooped out a hole.

"Come, get into this hole, quick!" he said.

The girl got into the hole, and the deer began kicking snow over her. Very soon the girl had vanished, and there was only a mound of snow to show where she had been.

The Moon Man came down from the sky, stopped his reindeer and got out of his sledge. He walked all around, looking about him and searching for the girl, but he could not find her. He even went up to the mound and looked at the top of it, but he never guessed what it was.

"How very strange!" said the Moon Man. "Where could the girl have got to? I cannot find her. I think I'll go away now and come down again later. I'll be sure to find her then and carry her away with me."

With this, he got into his sledge, and his deer bore him off to the sky.

As soon as he had gone, the draught-deer scraped the snow away, and the girl came out of the hole.

"Let us go to the camp quickly!" she said. "Or else the Moon Man will see me and come down again. I won't be able to hide from him a second time."

She got into her sledge, and the draught-deer whisked her away as quick as lightning. They soon reached the camp, and the girl ran into her father's choom. But her father was out. Who would help her now?

Said the draught-deer:

"You must hide, for the Moon Man will be after us."

"Where shall I hide?" the girl asked.

"I will turn you into something—a stone, perhaps," said the deer.

"No, it won't do, he will discover me."

"A hammer."

"That won't do, either."

"A pole."

"No."

"A hair of the hide hanging over the door."

"No, no."

"What, then? I know, I'll turn you into a lamp."

"All right."

"Well, then, crouch down."

The girl crouched down, the deer struck the ground with his hoof, and lo!—she turned into a lamp which burned so brightly that it lit up the whole choom.

Meanwhile the Moon Man had been searching for the girl among her deer, and he now came tearing onto the camping site.

He tied his own deer to a post, entered the choom and began looking for her again. He looked everywhere, but could not find her. He searched in between the poles that supported the top of the choom, he examined every utensil, every hair on the skins, every twig under the

beds, every bit of earth on the floor, but the girl was nowhere to be found.

As for the lamp, he did not notice it, for though it shone brightly, the Moon Man was brighter still.

"Strange," said the Moon Man. "Where can she be? I will have to go back to the sky."

He went outside and began untying the deer. And he had climbed into his sledge and was about to ride away when the girl ran up to the hanging of skins over the door, and leaning far out from under it, let out a peal of merry laughter.

"Here I am! Here I am!" she called to the Moon Man.

The Moon Man left his deer and rushed into the choom, but the girl had again turned into a lamp.

The Moon Man began to search for her. He looked over every twig and every leaf, every hair on the skins and every bit of earth, but find the girl he could not.

How very strange this was! Where could she be? It looked as though he would have to go back without her.

But no sooner had he left the choom and begun untying the deer than the girl leaned out from under the hanging of skins again.

"Here I am! Here I am!" she called with a laugh.

The Moon Man rushed into the choom and began to look for her again. He searched for a long time, he rummaged through everything and turned the whole place upside down, but find her he could not.

And so weary was he from the search that he became thin and weak and could barely move his legs or lift his arms.

Now the girl was no longer afraid of him. She took on her proper shape, bounded out of the choom, threw the Moon Man on to his back and bound his hands and feet with a rope.

"O-oh!" groaned the Moon Man. "You want to kill me, I know! Well, kill me, then! I deserve it, it is all my own fault, for I wanted to carry you off. But before I die, cover me with skins and let me get warm, I am so chilled."

The girl stared at him surprised.

"You—chilled?" she said. "You who are homeless, who have no choom? Why, you belong in the open, and that is where you must stay. What need have you of my skins!"

Then the Moon Man began to plead with the girl, and this is what he said:

"Since I am homeless, as you say, and doomed to be homeless for ever, set me free and let me roam the sky. I will be something for your

people to watch, something to give them pleasure. Set me free, and I will serve as a beacon for your people and guide them across the tundra. Set me free, and I will turn night into day! Set me free, and I will measure the year for your people. First I will be the Moon of the Old Bull, then the Moon of the Birth of the Calves, then the Moon of the Waters, then the Moon of the Leaves, then the Moon of Warmth, then the Moon of the Shedding of Antlers, then the Moon of Love among the Wild Deer, then the Moon of the First Winter, and then the Moon of the Shortening Days."

"And if I let you go free and you become strong and your hands and feet grow strong—will you not come down from the sky again and try to carry me off with you?" the girl asked.

"Oh no, never!" the Moon Man cried. "I will try to forget the very road that leads to your choom. You are far too clever. I will never come down from the sky again. Only let me go free, and I will light up sky and earth!"

So the girl let the Moon Man go free, and he rose up into the sky and flooded the earth with light.

